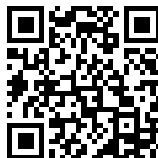

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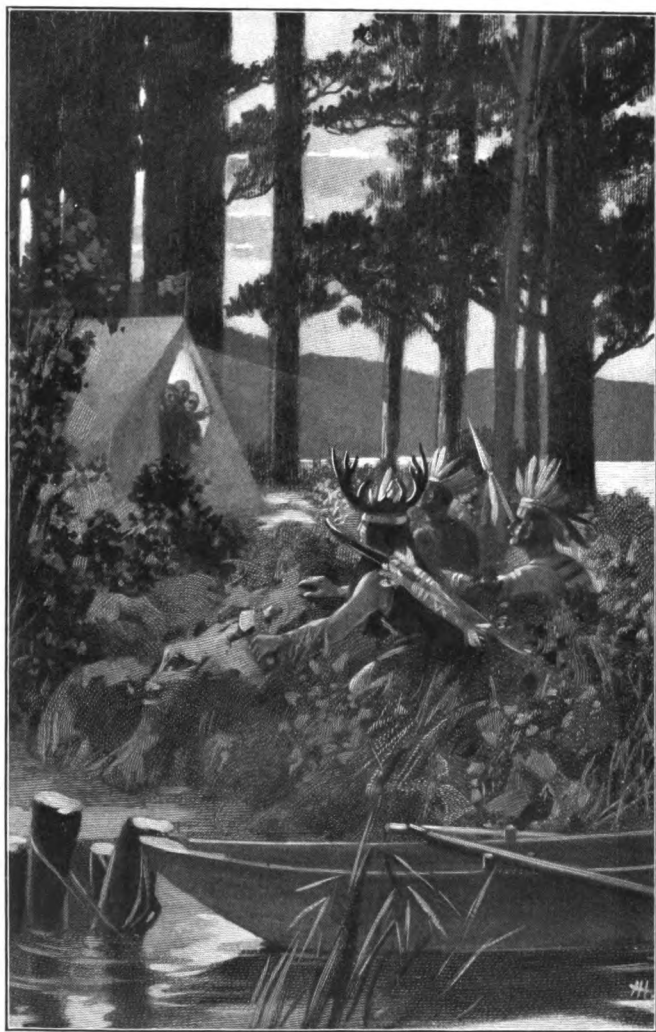
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SAINT
CUTHBERT'S
By J. E. COPUS · S. J.
(CUTHBERT)





“PEERING OUT CAUTIOUSLY THEY SAW, AS THEY THOUGHT, THREE INDIANS IN WAR-PAINT AND FEATHERS.”—See page 210.

SAINT CUTHBERT'S

BY
REV. J. E. COPUS, S.J.

AUTHOR OF
"HARRY RUSSELL, A ROCKLAND COLLEGE BOY"

With Frontispiece

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TO
MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN, LL.D

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SAINT CUTHBERT'S.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAUNTED MILL.

It was hot—terrifically hot! It was not the healthy heat of a summer day, but of one of those oppressive afternoons when one's energies seem crushed out. The September sun was still high up, and looked like a huge ball of copper, casting a bronze reflection over the great yard at St. Cuthbert's college. Not a breath was stirring, and one felt as if he were inhaling the atmosphere of an oven. Listlessly the boys sat on benches in shady corners. Handkerchiefs were wet from mopping the perspiration. It was too hot to play ball, or lawn tennis; too hot for any exertion; too hot, even, for conversation; too hot, some thought, almost for existence.

Several boys sat with their hands on their knees, with wrist-bands rolled back, occasionally fanning themselves with their wet handkerchiefs. The silence was almost unbroken. No one cared to talk, but all sat and watched huge copper-colored clouds rolling up from the east.

There was no muttering yet of the expected thunder, and while the lowest stratum of air was motionless and stifling, at a greater elevation there was a strong current. Pile on pile of portentous clouds mounted higher and higher. They resembled enormous boulders being rolled across the sky by invisible hands. Very soon the sun became obscured, yet there was not a breath of air below. So dense were the heavy masses that moved across the heavens that the light in the yard seemed almost to fail, and it was with difficulty that one boy could make out the lines of the paper he was reading.

The boys seemed awed. For some time no one spoke, as all watched the elemental disturbances overhead. For a few moments it grew darker still, and some chickens even went to roost, thinking night had come. The newspaper reader threw down his paper in disgust. And yet no rain fell. The light became a little stronger, yet the heavy, slate-colored clouds overhead made an artificial twilight, although it was but three o'clock in the afternoon.

"Whe—ew! this is awful!" said Joe Falvey, at last breaking the unwonted silence. "Look at those clouds, boys; wouldn't they make a fine setting for Macbeth's witches?"

"'A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,'" began Frank Stapleton, who was fond of quoting Shakespeare in season and out, "'and munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd.'"

"Just as you have been doing all the afternoon," broke in Tony Shiller. "Better look out, the prefect's on to you."

"'Give me, quoth I,'" continued Frank, not heeding

the interruption. "'Aroint thee, witch! the rump-fed ronyon cries. Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger; but in a sieve I'll thither sail, and, like a rat without a tail, I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.'"

"The penance—you certainly will if he catches you," continued the tease.

"'I'll give thee a wind,'" persisted the quoter.

"Don't, don't," shouted Peters, addressing an imaginary witch, "he's windy enough as it is."

Stapleton made a dive at the last speaker, who adroitly skipped aside and prepared to run. The weather, however, was too close for exertion, and both sank peaceably down on the same bench, tilted it back against the wall, and began mopping their faces.

"Talking of witches makes one think of ghosts," again began Stapleton. "I just tell you what, boys, heat or no heat, I can't stand this 'ongwee.'"

"This what?" asked three or four simultaneously.

"This 'ongwee.' That's French, so you're excused. Say, it won't rain this afternoon, altho' it is so black. Let's get up a ghost scare down at the old mill. You know it is said to be haunted, and a dark day like this is just the kind for a joke. What do you say, boys?"

At the prospect of some fun the mercurial temperament of healthy youth soon rose superior to the sultry weather. There was animation enough in a trice. All were eager for some diversion.

It was less than three weeks since the school year had commenced, and there was not much doing in the way of sports. It was too late for much baseball enthusiasm, and entirely too warm for football. It was the trying time between the seasons, when the weather

was expected to break up any day. Most of the boys were at a loss what to do.

"Capital! That's the thing," said Tom Ames. "But whom shall we scare? The old mill is 'a tale oft told' to nearly all the old boys." By "old boys" he meant those who had not arrived for the first time this year at St. Cuthbert's.

"That's not so," replied Stapleton. "I could mention a baker's dozen of old boys who would bite yet."

"Then they're our legitimate game," said the other. "Now for your plan."

Frank Stapleton was a big fellow, brimming over with good nature. He was devoid of meanness, but dearly loved a practical joke, and not unfrequently got into more or less serious trouble on that account. He had not the faculty of looking ahead to probable serious consequences.

He was strong and courageous, and always the champion—and the idol—of the small boy. Anything like hazing he despised, "because it looked," he said, "like taking a mean advantage of a fellow who doesn't know the ropes." But he saw nothing objectionable in what he called a "fair and square" practical joke, when one walked into it with his eyes wide open. The nature of the joke he now proposed appeared to him precisely in that light.

"My plan is this," he said. "You know the old mill is a ramshackle place, and makes a fellow feel kind of creepy at any time. I know where there is an old rusty dagger, used in a play last Christmas. We'll get that and hide it somewhere there in the mill. Somebody must find it. Then two or three must hide about the place, and make the most unearthly noises. There are

two stories to the place. We can get up under the roof. I'll bet none of the 'old fellows' will mount that high."

"But how will you get anybody out there on a day like this?" objected August Mengley, one of the group of eager listeners.

"We'll arrange that. It will be necessary for one of us to go with the other crowd, and in the height of the excitement he must discover the dagger. He must appear to be very much scared himself. I heard Clavering boasting the other day that all ghost stories were capable of a reasonable explanation, and that no one could scare him. We must get him to come along, for sure. Howard Hunter agreed with him in everything. We must have him, too. The only way to make sure of *him* is to dare him. Let's see: who else? Harry Selby? No good—he'll be suspicious. Leave him alone. Deming will make a good one, and, oh! yes, Fred Nash must be along. Let's see. That makes four: Nash, Deming, Clavering, and Hunter. We must have one more besides one of us. O'Madigan will do. He's not long from Ireland, and believes in fairies. Now, who will lead the victims out?"

"Say, Gus," said Falvey to Mengley, "you're the man for that job."

"Excuse me," Mengley replied. "I know those fellows, and couldn't move one of them. I tell you who, I think, should be the dux. Stapleton's the man. What a solemn face he can put on when he likes. Look at him now."

Just at that moment Stapleton was standing a little apart from the group, communing with himself whether this was not too mad a prank to be safe. He had large features, and when his face was in repose he

appeared to be thirty or thirty-five rather than just eighteen—his actual age.

“Was it right?” he said to himself, several times. “It’s only a joke, anyway, and there’s no harm in a joke. There’s no harm where none’s intended,” argued the unconscious sophist.

Whatever difficulties presented themselves to his mind were soon banished, and in a moment after he was all enthusiasm again. Ah! it would have been better for him, and better for more than one, had he reasoned with himself a moment or two longer.



CHAPTER II.

HOW THE PLAN MATURED.

By consent of all in the conspiracy, Frank Stapleton was selected to “bring on the victims.” It was agreed upon that if Frank and his dupes did not appear in the lane near the old mill in half an hour after the conspirators had arrived, they were to understand that for this time the plan had failed.

“‘In the lexicon of youth,’” mouthed Stapleton in mock tragedy, “‘there is no such word as—’”

“Ongwee,” suggested Falvey, and for his kindness he had to parry a thrust from the big fist of the Shakespearian student.

Stapleton watched Falvey, Shiller, Ames, and Mengley start off. He was not altogether pleased with his

own task. Like many another, he would have preferred to enjoy the cream of the fun, without the unpleasant task of arranging the details. For a few moments after the others had left he felt inclined to relinquish the plan, but human respect prevented him from doing this. A thought came to him to drop the matter right there, and let the others come home at the time agreed upon, but then he argued that that would be acting a lie, and, above all things, he abhorred lying. His good qualities—those most admirable in him—seemed destined to get him into trouble.

He walked leisurely over to Howard Hunter and Clavering, and sat down. As good luck would have it, Nash and Deming sauntered by at the same moment. Stapleton threw out the bait, and all were soon nibbling at it.

"I was just thinking," he began, "what a witch's Sabbath there must be overhead. Look at those somber clouds. They make one's blood creep. There! that train whistle in the distance sounds like the wail of a lost soul. Ugh! Say, Howard, do you believe in spirits — 'I am thy father's ghost, doomed for a time to walk the earth,' and all that sort of thing, eh?"

"I don't know what to think about these things," said Hunter. "I have not studied the question to any extent. I know that most of the ghost stories can be explained away. I remember one story of that kind in particular which had a most prosaic ending, and another that ended in a tragedy."

"Oh! let's hear them, there's a good fellow," begged Nash and Clavering.

"They are brief—that is, as I tell them," replied Howard. "One was a story of a haunted house for

which no tenant could be found by reason of unearthly noises heard at night. A sensible workman was given the house free of rent on condition of residence, and found the mysterious noise was caused by the limb of a tree scratching against a window pane in the garret. The best part of this story is that the fellow was sharp enough not to cut away the limb, and lived rent free in the house for years."

"Pshaw! that's a poor ghost story," said Stapleton. "But what's the other?"

"Same kind of accessories; house haunted, rent free, brave man. But this ghost used to appear, and when fired at would instantly hold up the bullet. A sharp Kentuckian offered to live in the house, and he brought several guns with him. His ghostship got mixed up and extracted the ball from the wrong gun during the day, and that night fell dead at the shooter's feet with a ball through his heart. You see, most of the ghost stories are frauds like these, but for all that I am not sure but that there might not be preternatural manifestations sometimes."

"Like the visitations at the old mill down the road," ventured Stapleton, adroitly leading up to his plan. "'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio,'" he continued.

"The haunted mill!" said Hunter. "Rubbish! That's no more haunted than I am."

"But there may be something in it, after all. You know what a desolate-looking place it is."

"Oh! yes. Give a dog a bad name—and so forth. It's certainly an old, ruinous-looking affair, and so has easily been surrounded with imaginary horrors."

"But may not such things be permitted sometimes?"

"What things? Ghosts? There's no ghosts there, I'll warrant."

"Anyway, you daren't go and investigate on a dark afternoon like this."

"Daren't! *Daren't!* Look here, Frank, you can't bluff me." Hunter's eyes shone angrily, and his usually pale face flushed.

"Well, I should advise you not to go to the mill to-day. Better keep away on a dark day like this."

"I'll go to-day if I feel like it," was the sharp answer. Stapleton's diplomacy was succeeding beyond his expectations.

"If you'll go, I'll go," said Deming. "I'm not afraid."

Gideon Deming had a big, fat, freckled face, and an occasional lisp. His eyes were set so close together that looking at him from a little distance he appeared to have but one. He consciously tried to cultivate an expression of candor, but in this he was never successful, for his face on these occasions resembled that of a poodle dog waiting for a bite of bread from his master's hand. Although much larger and taller than Hunter, he had an unbounded confidence in the other boy's judgment, and was swayed by him completely, being without force of character of his own.

"Oh! you're afraid," said Stapleton. "Better stay at home."

"No, thir. If Howard theth tho, I'm there," and the poodle tried hard to look ingenuously into Stapleton's face.

"Well, I'm going, and going there right now," remarked Hunter, still nettled.

"Better not," persisted Stapleton, and then with feigned reluctance, the actor continued, "but if you insist on going, I'll go with you."

It was Hunter's opportunity to give a home thrust now, but he was too generous to use it. He merely replied, "Come on, then."

Nash, who was a tall fellow with an excitable temperament, was the next volunteer. Then Tom O'Madigan was asked to come along. He made a characteristic reply:

"Lave well enough alone, boys. If the fairies or the ghosts are down at the ould mill, i' the name o' common sinse let them stay there."

It was evident he could not be caught, and Stapleton was forced to be content with the four others.

It happened to be a free day at the college, when all enjoyed the privilege of going beyond bounds without special permission. Taking advantage of this, the boys started immediately, and were soon trudging toward the mysterious building known for miles around as the haunted mill.

CHAPTER III.

HOW THE JOURNEY WAS MADE.

FOR the better understanding of the events that are here chronicled, it will be well to give a description of the old mill, and relate some of the traditions that have given the place such an unsavory reputation. Few structures could be more uninviting in appearance than

the old brick flour mill, now falling into decay. Away back in the fifties, so ran the tradition, it was owned and worked by a miserly miller. The early settlers around St. Cuthbert's remembered this man as a thin, tall, gaunt creature, with long claw-like fingers and eyes sunk deep in his head. By pinching and grasping, he yearly added large sums to his hoard. Too distrustful to bank his money, he was reputed to have hidden large sums in and around the mill.

His head miller was paid the smallest wages, and sometimes it was months before he could get any money at all. One day, so the story ran, the mill-hand went home after his day's work and found both his flour sack and potato bin empty. He came back to the miller and demanded his wages. The old skinflint was loath to part with it, and refused to pay him. High words followed, and the foreman, in a fit of desperation, was said to have cut the miser's throat, and thrown his body into a well near by.

This story was sufficient to invest the place with horror for the simple country-folk, and they refused to bring their grist to the mill, which soon fell into disuse, while its reputation went from bad to worse. A building is like a man—it is hard to erase the stain on the character of either. In time the country-side people declared that at night they saw the old miller's ghost wandering about the desolate building. After the war the mill had the reputation of containing an illicit still, and people declared they saw the smoke and smelt the mash as they passed. Old residents of the vicinity still claimed to remember the time when it was raided by excise officers.

Country boys, coming home late at night from town

would drive past the place at a furious rate, and not a few believed the place was the headquarters of a gang of robbers. This belief was strengthened by the fact that only a few years before the events which are related here, a stage coach was stopped and robbed near this spot. Not a few, and among them some of the most staid heads of the district, thought that three or four insane men inhabited the place, and, what was in reality the wind howling through the partially dismantled building was taken for their maniacal ravings.

The bad reputation of the place was well known to the college boys, and it required no ordinary courage on a dark, murky, portentous afternoon, to make a first visit there. The conspirators, it must be remarked, had frequently visited the spot, and the mysterious in it had long since been dispelled from their minds. They fully realized, however, what an instrument for terror the old mill could be made for the uninitiated, or the over-impressionable.

Such was its ill-favored reputation. Its appearance did not mend matters. On the ground floor all the woodwork of the doors and windows had rotted away, and in many places these apertures were enlarged by the crumbling away of the mortar and bricks. Not a portion of the stairway remained, although the two floors overhead were still solid. In the center of the floors ran an old grain chute, beginning at the upper floor and extending to within a foot or so of the ground.

Under the roof was also a grain bin of considerable dimensions, and in a fair state of preservation, while in a corner on the second floor there was a mysterious, three-cornered, doorless room, large enough to conceal

three or four men behind the wooden partition. On one side of the deserted place was a deep, dry ditch, and the fatal well was at the gable end, and was shaded by a large, fantastic-looking elm, whose branches almost swept a part of the roof. The awesomeness of the whole was enhanced by the fact that the paddock, in which the ruin stood, was enclosed by a high and strong barbed wire fence. This was the only indication that any human being ever went near the place, but even this fact lent an additional horror, as it clearly demonstrated the impossibility of a hasty retreat.

Howard Hunter was vexed with himself as he trudged along toward the mill. He realized that he was engaged in a piece of folly, and decided within himself that after all it would have been much more manly to have refused to come. He could see no good in the adventure, beyond showing to the boys that he was not a coward, but that fact, he was fully aware, was already established. He was convinced that there was nothing preternatural about the mill, and if it happened to be the haunt of tramps, what end would be obtained by molesting them?

In spite of his talk with Stapleton against ghosts in general, he was far from disbelieving in the existence of the spirit world, or that manifestations from it were sometimes permitted. Then the delicacy of his own organization rendered him more sensitive to impressions than were his healthier and stronger companions. He believed in the preternatural as a providential instrument sometimes employed in the detection and punishment of crime, but he rejected the many clumsy and fraudulent stories invented with the apparent intention of imposing on the credulity of the vulgar.

The darkness of the day, the enervating influence of the atmosphere, and the talk about ghosts had already made him as much predisposed to be frightened as were the rest of the dupes. The difference was that, in the others, their nervousness was already apparent. They talked incessantly to keep up their courage, and the more they talked the more excited their imaginations became.

Howard was silent for the greater part of the journey, but his silence had the same effect on him as the incessant chatter had upon the others. The less he talked the more his mind dwelt upon the wonderful. Thus it happened that long before the spot was reached all were in that disposition of mind in which the commonest things of life take on a gruesome significance.

Before the ruin was reached there was a bit of lonely lane to be passed. Large trees almost touched overhead, and both sides of the narrow wagon track were thickly overgrown with tall horse-weed. The heavy foliage and the lowness of the ground made the lane quite a cool spot in comparison with the higher and less shaded regions about it. On ordinary occasions this coolness would have been grateful, but to-day the perception of the sudden change of temperature had the contrary effect. It was depressing. All, with the exception of Stapleton, had already half hypnotized themselves into the belief that they were going to be frightened.

"Shuh! isn't it cold already?" remarked Nash.

Frank Stapleton took his cue at once, and assumed a shiver, making his teeth chatter in the most approved stage fashion.

"Whath tha-at," screamed Cyclops, who was shiver-

ing with genuine fear. There was a slight disturbance in the tall weeds a few feet ahead of him.

"That's only a chipmunk, or a rab—" began Hunter, but his voice was lost in the shriek that followed from Deming.

"Look, look!" said the latter, frantically clutching Hunter's arm for protection, although he stood, even in his fright, towering a head above his friend. It was the oak being supported by the ivy.

"Booby!" said Hunter, "you're a pretty fellow to go ghost-hunting! You'd faint if you saw a white cow. See, that's only a jack-rabbit," and he pointed to that fleet-footed animal as it scudded down the lane in front of the party. It was quite evident to Hunter that Deming could never stand the test of a real fright, so, after a whispered consultation with Stapleton, it was decided to post him outside the building, making him understand that that was to be the post of honor.

The excited band had now come in sight of the old mill, and, as the sound of his own voice seemed to give each one courage, all, with the exception of Hunter, were talking at once, and in an elevated tone. Howard had continued silent the greater part of the journey. His unusual bad humor helped him to this. He was determined, however, that should anything unusual occur at the mill, he would not leave until he received an explanation of it, founded on reasonable grounds. Everything was to be subordinated to reason. Everything was to be accounted for. He would go to the bottom of everything. In fact, the boy was in that state of mind when it would be extremely dangerous for him to leave anything unexplained.

Just at the moment that he had formed the deter-

mination to investigate and prove everything, he received a sudden shock. He was looking toward the mill and saw something white in the upper story. It was indistinct and seemed to be some feet away from the window. Nevertheless, it was white—and moving. The rest of the company had not seen the apparition. Had they done so, most certainly the expedition would have ended in an ignominious stampede for home.

Another incident tended to depress the spirits of all. Near the mill was the lonely and neglected spot which was, for the college boys, even on the brightest days, a place of peculiar solemnity, and was generally avoided. This spot contained three neglected graves. The mounds had long since been washed away, and the three tombstones were leaning in different directions, having been heaved out of position by the frosts of many winters. The ground for yards around the graves was thickly matted with wild myrtle, or wild smilax, weird in its very luxuriance. The heavy clouds overhead rendered the trees and the myrtle blacker than usual, while the gray lichen on the tottering stones gave these memorials of the dead a ghastly paleness. It was a graveyard silhouette. On ordinary occasions this place was a solemn spot, but to-day the pathos of neglect seemed more marked than ever, and, of course, did not tend to cheer the spirits of the boys as they hurried by.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW THE BOYS SHOWED THEIR COURAGE.

THE company had now arrived at the high wire fence. As they carefully mounted it, and dropped on the other side, it seemed to them that they were entering enchanted ground. In a moment those hitherto perfect chatterboxes appeared to lose all their conversational powers.

" 'This is a time that tries men's souls,' " said Stapleton, indulging in his inveterate habit of quoting. A sickly smile from two or three greeted the, by no means comforting, sentence, and he did not try again.

When the boys entered the mill they saw that the lower floor had long since rotted away, and now there was nothing there but the bare ground. It smelt damp and unhealthy. People in an ordinary frame of mind would have at once recognized the fact that cattle were accustomed to frequent the place for shade. But the visitors were not in a sound state of mind just at present.

" There's nothing here, at all events," said Stapleton. " If there are any ghosts above, let's wake 'em up." He took a piece of board and began to pound the old grain chute. As soon as the reverberation had died away the boys heard a low, moaning, mournful cry, as of some one in distress. It seemed to come from one corner, then from another, then another, and finally from all corners at once.

" What on earth is that?" asked Clavering, with blanched face and shaking knees.

Stapleton himself was momentarily startled. The old, dry chute, extending from the floor to the topmost story, acted as an immense sounding-trumpet, so distributing the sound over the ground floor that it was impossible to locate it. Sometimes it resembled the moaning of the winter wind, then a cry of pain, and ever and anon, the quickened imaginations of those below caused them to distinguish tones of anger in the mysterious sound as it rose and fell.

"That's only the wind around the eaves," said Hunter, "and I'm going up to the next floor to investigate."

Frank Stapleton was anxious to be the first to go up, but Hunter would not listen to him. Placing a board against the wall Howard clambered up part of the way, and then swung himself up to the next floor by the strength of his muscles. He was quickly followed by Stapleton, Clavering, and Nash. Deming had already been posted outside, and, as he marched up and down, reminded one of Barnaby Rudge.

As soon as they were all on the second floor the searching began again. For the nonce the mysterious noises had ceased; and the silence was broken only by a frightened whisper, or the creaking of the dry flooring beneath their feet. They peered cautiously into the three-cornered room, and found nothing there except some old straw, across which one of the boards of the partition had fallen. Even the rustling of the straw as Stapleton stepped on it, startled the others. Suddenly he jumped back. "Look! look! what is this?" he said in a hoarse whisper. He then stooped down, and from under the straw drew out a dagger in its shining case. He unsheathed the blade, and disclosed several

rusty spots on it, evidently of blood, long since dried. At the moment he did this the old building fairly shook with the most demoniacal shrieks in rapid succession. What could it all mean? What little color there was in the adventurers' faces soon vanished, and they stood there resembling veritable ghosts. Stapleton ground his teeth, and rolled his eyes wildly.

"Put it down, put it down," whispered Hunter, very much frightened now in spite of himself, although the previous moans had not unsettled him as they had done the others. He attributed them to people overhead—tramps, perhaps, who were taking this means to scare off intruders. But this latest development completely unnerved him. His active mind saw something in it that seemed to bring him close to the preternatural. Tramps could have no use for such a dagger, and even if they had committed a crime, they would be only too anxious to hide the evidence of their guilt. This dagger must have lain there for years. And that awful, horrible shrieking! What could it all mean?

"Leave it there. We have no business with it. Let it alone," pleaded Howard with Stapleton. The latter dropped the weapon, and the shrieking ceased as suddenly as it had begun. This was more mysterious than ever to Hunter. To the others it was merely a relief.

After a short pause a different sound was heard, above, below, all around them. It resembled neither a groan, nor distant thunder, but a combination of both, together with a wail of pain. It was indescribable, and inexplicable to the boys. They seemed stupefied with the mysterious doings around them. This last manifestation seemed to paralyze their energies, and

they looked at each other in blank horror. Clavering seemed almost maudlin with fright. He was so scared that one looking at him then would have declared him to be cross-eyed, and he could scarcely speak. Stapleton declared that he was determined to have that dagger at any cost. He stooped down and picked it up again. Instantly the shrieking recommenced. Hunter remembered the tale, in *Marmion*, of the nuns anointing the dagger that had wounded the soldier who obtained relief. He wondered if there were any connection between this rusty dagger and the uneasy spirit of some murdered man—perhaps that haggard old miller “doomed for a time to walk the earth.” Stapleton put the poniard into his pocket, and the din increased, if possible.

“Look here, fellows,” said the confederate, “I don’t think it safe for us to stay here any longer. We had better get out of this.”

“These sounds come from above there,” remarked Nash, who appeared to have the courage of despair, “and I’m going up to the next floor to see what it is.”

Stapleton tried to prevent him, but the tall boy was determined. He made for the open trap-door in the corner, and was searching for footholes in the wall to assist him in mounting, but something happened just at that moment which furthered Stapleton’s idea. Fortune was favoring the conspirator that afternoon.

Suddenly a shower of broken bricks began to pour down through the old stair hole. At the same moment the harsh, grating sound, the moaning and the shrieks grew louder. Hunter was looking at the ceiling near the hole when the bricks came pouring down. He saw, as he thought, the bricks come through the floor with-

out disturbing the wood. He was not aware that the joist at which he was gazing hid from view a small hole, through which the bricks had been thrown.

"They can not hurt us," said Nash, above the din. Then raising his voice, he shouted:

"I conjure you by the—"

His conjuration, however, was lost in the noise which increased as the bricks fell faster and faster. The three boys were backing toward an aperture in the wall that had once served as a door on the second floor.

"Take care! you'll break your necks," shouted Deming from the outside, in his excitement forgetting his usual lisp. The frightened lads saw the danger from which they had so narrowly escaped, but they determined to stay in the ill-fated place no longer. They made a rush for the hole through which they had ascended, but the flying brick made it too dangerous to risk a descent. In their desperation they rushed to the old doorway in the wall, and without stopping to think, Nash, Clavering and Hunter made a leap—a distance of fifteen feet—to the ground outside. None were hurt. Stapleton went down the way he had come up. All then made a rush for the barbed wire fence.

Just as Hunter, who, out of consideration for Deming, was the last to get over the fence, was descending on the other side, he caught a glimpse of something on the roof of the mill. It was running along on the ridge-board on all fours. In the semi-darkness of that cloudy afternoon, he could not tell whether it was a human being or a brute—a ferocious baboon or a raving maniac. All that he saw was that it appeared to be covered with brown hair, and to have enormous

teeth which seemed to gnash fiercely at the receding intruders. This was the last shock in a long series of horrors, and it was too much for Howard Hunter. He was now thoroughly, completely frightened. His dread was so tangible to him that it caused a sickly feeling to come over him, and, for a moment, he thought he would fall. The mental strain of the fear which possessed him was so great, that, as he afterward said, he felt as if some one was pressing a heavy weight down on his brain. By a strong effort he recovered himself, and, although quieter than usual, none of his thoughtless companions observed how serious a shock he had suffered.

Away from the scene of the mystery the natural rebound of spirits soon followed in the others. As the distance and security from possible pursuit grew greater, the others began to talk, and even make light of their late fright. Howard, however, neither laughed nor spoke much. He was apparently the least concerned of all, and it was only a close observer who would discover, by the dilatation of the pupils of his eyes, and his slightly hysterical manner, the terrible strain under which he was laboring.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESULT OF THE SCARE.

It was not until after supper that Stapleton met his fellow conspirators. He was elated and laughing over the success of their ruse. They, on the contrary, were feeling "cheap" at what they considered their failure,

for they were under the impression that they had been discovered, and that Nash and Clavering were, even now, telling all the boys how nicely they had fooled the would-be ghosts.

"Don't you believe it," exclaimed Stapleton, elated. "A more successful ghost scare was never accomplished, and I'll bet that Clav and Nash are now scaring the wits out of the fellows by their recital. All except Hunter were thoroughly frightened, and they jumped out of the second story window."

Joe Falvey and others looked incredulous, but they soon saw that their informant was in earnest, and that Nash was relating the adventure.

"How did you manage that shrieking just at the right moment every time?" asked Stapleton.

"What do you mean?" asked Shiller. "Joe shrieked in an alarmingly promiscuous manner. There was no method in it at all."

"What! you did not see me lift that dagger, Joe?" asked Frank, excitedly.

"No; we saw none of you. We were all inside the corn-bin on the top story, and a mighty hot hole it was."

"But how on earth could you fellows shriek just when I touched the weapon, stop when I put it down, and shriek again when I took it up a second time?" inquired Stapleton, quite mystified.

"All by accident," said Falvey; "we knew absolutely nothing of what you fellows were doing down below. That pounding on the chute was all the signal we received. By that we knew you had come. That's all."

"What a wonderful coincidence," resumed the leader of this mad freak. "Remarkable! and you mean to say

that when Nash was determined to climb to the top story you did not throw bricks around to prevent him?"

"We do," said Shiller. "We never knew any one ever thought of coming up."

"That's wonderful! Say, fellows, there's something awfully strange about all this, anyway," and just then Stapleton had a strange look in his eyes.

"Funking, too, eh?" sneered Ames.

"No; but—but isn't it all strange? There were so many coincidences that—"

"That you, too, will soon believe there were real ghosts there," remarked Ames, as he walked off.

Frank Stapleton began to revolve the whole affair in his mind. He could not shake off the presentiment of some impending evil. He tried to put the feeling out of his mind by resuming his questioning.

"Joe, how did you boys make that sound that seemed everywhere at once?"

"By moaning vigorously down the old chute. It's as dry as tinder and makes a perfect sounding-box."

"And that sound resembling distant thunder?"

"By rubbing the end of a stick perpendicularly on the old bin. That was a good sounding-board, too. Fine, wasn't it?"

"But who was the artist in shrieks? Toward the end they were blood-curdling enough to awaken the dead."

"Joe Falvey was the master in the art of demoniacal raving," came the dubious compliment from Shiller.

Nash and Clavering, seeing Stapleton talking earnestly with Falvey, thought Frank was telling them of the adventure of the afternoon. Presently Clavering came over to Falvey's group, and said:

"Did Stapleton tell you of our experience with real ghosts this afternoon?"

Stapleton immediately began a frantic description which soon drew a crowd of boys around him. He was a good story-teller, and the boys listened eagerly. Among them was Hunter, who had not recovered from his shock, and was longing for any kind of distraction from his own thoughts. Stapleton enjoyed the wide-mouthed wonder of those not in the secret. "And this," he continued, "is something like the moaning sound we heard," and then he made a good imitation of the rising and falling moan that had so unnerved the listeners that day.

Suddenly Howard Hunter turned his now pale, haggard face full on Stapleton, and in a partially hysterical manner, exclaimed:

"O Frank! please! for God's sake, let us hear no more," and he shivered as he spoke. The boys knew well that Hunter was not given to posing, or "playing off." Many at once recognized that there was something wrong with him. In an instant Frank Stapleton saw what was the matter. Like a flash he understood what he had done. He saw that he had perhaps seriously injured one for whom he would have given his right arm rather than he should come to harm. The sudden discovery of Howard's perturbed state stung him like a sharp physical pain.

"What a fool I have been!" he muttered to himself, "I have badly scared poor Howard, and, perhaps, injured him for life. Fool! fool!"

In an instant he plunged through the crowd, sending the listeners right and left without ceremony. Taking Hunter's arm he found the boy was trembling.

"What's the matter, Howard? Say, old man, I didn't mean to scare you so badly. It's all a hoax. Indeed it is. Don't be frightened. There's nothing to be scared about. Indeed there isn't."

Hunter smiled, but rather sadly, and his large, expressive eyes looked doubly large in the gathering gloom. Frank noticed uneasily that they seemed to have a fixed stare.

"That's all right, Frank. But that moaning! It is inexplicable! It frightened me, but I'm all right now."

Frank Stapleton assured him again and again that the whole thing was a hoax. Howard replied that he was sure that it was, and this answer seemed to satisfy Stapleton. Unfortunately, each referred to a different event. Howard understood that Stapleton's imitation of the moaning at the mill was the hoax. Stapleton himself intended Hunter to understand the whole affair of the afternoon was the hoax. With this unconscious misunderstanding they separated, as the bell rang for evening studies.

It was quite dark during the last recess and night prayers. Stapleton was uneasy and conscience-stricken. He knew Howard's nervous disposition and his extreme sensitiveness, and he could not shake off that sense of some impending evil about to happen to his friend. He looked for Hunter in the yard during recess, but could not find him. He, at last, saw him in the study hall. The boys were not allowed to converse there, so he beckoned him outside. Hunter came to the door: but remained in the full light of the room.

"Won't you walk?" asked Stapleton, kindly.

"Not to-night, Frank; I would rather stay here."

"You are not frightened now, eh, Howard?"

"N-no. I'm a little nervous. That's all."

"Well, my dear Howard," said Frank earnestly, "I assure you the whole thing was a joke intended to scare you fellows. That's all there was in it."

"I know, Frank," said Hunter, "that's all right. It's over now. Don't fret about me."

Again there was the misunderstanding. Unfortunately Stapleton used generalities only. Had he once mentioned names much future sorrow and trouble would have been averted. That evening at night-prayers in the chapel two boys, at least, prayed fervently. One, that no serious harm might follow from his joke; the other that he might regain his calm of mind, and lose in sound sleep the burden of his fright.

Immediately after prayers the boys retired to bed. Two prefects sat, one at each end of the long dormitory. That night they were surprised to see Howard Hunter kneel at his bedside for private devotions long after the other boys were in bed. Poor Howard dreaded the putting out of the lights that night. He knew he would not sleep. The desolate feeling of lying awake amid a sleeping multitude was to be his that night in all its intensity. The beds were arranged in three long rows on either side of the center aisle. Hunter's bed was next to the aisle, and he faced the window in the direction of the old mill. Like one dazed he saw the lamps turned low and then go out. Then the new moon rose and shed a soft half light around the room, animating every post, and peopling every shadowed corner.

Those only who have lain awake from nervous tension all through the night in a large dormitory or hospital ward will realize the awful loudness of muffled

sounds during the dark hours. Ordinary healthy breathing then sounds like roaring water, and the tick of a spider, or the crack of drying wood, will send a shock through the human frame with an intensity which a pistol report would produce in the daytime. All this and much more poor Hunter suffered that night. His head did not ache as we ordinarily understand a headache, but there was that dull mental pain of the unexplained mystery. Even now he argued with himself that he did not believe in ghosts, as ghosts. Their appearance would, at worst, be a shock to the senses. His fear was of a different kind. The more he thought of the matter, in the stillness of the night, the more he became convinced that the dagger had been left in the old mill by a providential dispensation for the ultimate discovery of the murderer.

Was not, then, the removal of it a thwarting of the ends of Providence? Would not the spirit that had watched it all these years now follow it to its present resting-place? Might it not at any moment appear to him and demand the restoration of the dagger to its old place under the straw? Of course, in broad daylight this reasoning looks fantastical, and had the boy been less perturbed he must have seen that the straw itself must have been placed there within a very recent period. Alas! for Howard; he was now in no condition to see matters in their true light.

Such thoughts as these molested him all night long. He lay on his right side with his face partly buried in the pillow, but with wild, haggard eyes fixed with an intent stare at the window, every moment expecting he knew not what. His hands were clasped over his breast, and in that position he dared not move a muscle.

Wearily the hours passed by. The picture of that dagger seemed burnt into his brain. Eleven, twelve, one, two, three, he heard strike from the distant church tower. How he longed for the morning light, and yet he realized that for him the gladdening rays would bring no relief. He tried to pray, but could not. His faculties were too dazed, and an overruling dread mastered all. Gladly he would have recited his beads, but they were around his neck, and he dared not stir to remove them. He lay there in the dim light, trembling, a picture of fright.

Let no one who reads these pages accuse Hunter of cowardice. In physical dangers he was known to be otherwise than cowardly. Had he not, the June before, at the imminent risk of his life, stopped a runaway team? No! he was no coward, and yet the unsolved horror of the unknown had completely mastered him.

Frank Stapleton had, also, passed an uneasy night. The dread of something about to happen to his friend had unnerved him. About two in the morning he went over to Hunter's bed, being convinced that his friend would be unable to sleep. His own bed was on the other side of the aisle, so that, as he threaded his way bare-footed between the beds of sleeping boys, Hunter did not know that he was approaching.

He touched the boy's pillow with his hand before Hunter knew there was any one moving in the dormitory. Stapleton, as he afterward related, declared that he could never forget that look of horror on Hunter's face. The face was livid, ghastly. Knowing that there was something moving at his bedside, he tried to speak. Stapleton only saw the horrible, noiseless movement

of his dry lips, which seemed incapable of sound. His fingers were twitching, and it appeared to the watcher, who stood shivering in the cold night air, that the large, dark, handsome eyes of his friend had a look of despair in them. Once he thought Hunter was dying, and he was about to run for a priest, but with a sudden motion the trembling boy covered his face with the sheet. Stapleton did not know what to do. Should he awaken the prefect? If he did, would he not frighten the poor boy a second time? He adopted another expedient, and perhaps the best thing under the circumstances. He laid his hand firmly on Hunter's clasped hands, and then bent down and whispered loudly in the sufferer's ear:

"Howard! Howard! don't be so scared. It's only Frank. Frank Stapleton. What's the matter, old man? Are you sick? Can I do anything for you? Shall I call Mr. Hillson or the infirmarian?"

The sound of Stapleton's voice reassured the poor lad. Frank gently drew the sheet from his face. The wide-open eyes were immediately fixed on the window again, although he answered:

"I'm—I'm all right, Frank. Get into bed again, you'll catch cold."

Patting him tenderly on the cheek Stapleton said, encouragingly:

"You'll be all right in the morning, Howard. Try to sleep now. Good night, old fellow."

When Stapleton left the victim of his practical joke, he was in no enviable frame of mind. He was disgusted with himself, and was determined to make a clean breast of it to the prefect the first opportunity in the morning.

CHAPTER VI.

WAS THERE NO HARM DONE?

EARLY the next morning, before Mass, Stapleton told Mr. Hillson everything. The prefect had heard something of the story already, but was quite unprepared to learn of Hunter's mental condition during the night. He submitted Stapleton to a severe cross-examination, and, while he was vexed at the nonsense of the affair, and grieved at the serious result, he could not but admire the boy's candor in concealing nothing, and his evident desire to take all the blame upon himself.

"It's all through me, sir," said Stapleton, almost crying, "and if Howard gets sick I alone am to blame. What a fool I was to carry it so far! Why didn't I tell him before we got home?"

"Have you told him it was all a joke?" inquired Mr. Hillson.

"Yes, sir, but the worst of it is that all I say seems to have no influence with him."

"Very well. I'll do the best I can. Send Hunter to me after breakfast."

As soon as the prefect had taken his morning meal he went to his room and waited for the boy. In a few minutes a timid rap was heard. When Hunter entered Mr. Hillson was shocked at his appearance.

"Good-morning, Howard," he said cheerily, "you don't look quite well. Is anything the matter with you, my boy?"

Hunter's face was very pale from a sleepless night.

Dark rings were around his eyes, and their lids drooped in a tired manner. His lips were white, and his face resembled marble rather than flesh and blood. There was perfect confidence between these two. The prefect knew the boy thoroughly.

"I am sorry to see you in this state, Howard. I have heard about that foolish affair at the mill yesterday. Haven't you sense enough to know that the noise was all a hoax gotten up to scare you?"

"I know it was, sir," said Howard, unfortunately still under the impression that the hoax meant Stapleton's moanings in the yard the night before. He realized that the prefect wanted to comfort him, but felt sure he knew nothing of the horrors of the mill.

"Try, then, to put the whole thing out of your mind, and don't let it bother you any more. I think, as you did not sleep well last night and do not look as if you could do much work to-day, you had better go over to the infirmary and rest there."

This well meant kindness of the prefect was, perhaps, the worst mistake of the whole series. Solitude was, in Hunter's present condition, the very worst thing for him. Had he remained with the boys that day, he must, sooner or later, have learned the true state of affairs. Now he had more time for further unhealthy brooding.

Howard, as may be expected, took no breakfast that morning. At noon some light broth was brought to him, but it remained untouched. About four o'clock the infirmarian noticed that he had a high fever, and told him to get into bed. The college physician saw him an hour later and appeared anxious and uneasy. He stayed with him for nearly two hours, and when

he left, told the President that the boy had an attack of brain fever.

"He has had a severe shock of some kind, and I am afraid it will go hard with him. He is not of a robust constitution. I'll come again to-night, Father." These were the ominous words of the kindly medical man.

The news that Hunter was down with an attack of brain fever spread through the college like wild-fire. Many were the sincere expressions of regret, for Hunter was a general favorite. Stapleton was almost beside himself with regret. He offered to do every kind of possible and impossible thing for the sick boy. He wanted to sit up with him every night, but the physician had ordered absolute quiet, and none but experienced persons were allowed in the room.

Deming was inconsolable. He saved up his pocket-money and bought a whole box of caramels, and dogged the infirmarian's footsteps for days, until he consented to take them to Hunter.

In order that the regrets of all should not be useless, Stapleton engaged all the members of the League of the Sacred Heart throughout the college to make novenas and offer communions for his friend's recovery.

Day after day the boys silently watched the physician make his visit to the patient, and it was with that "hope deferred that maketh the heart sick" that Frank daily saw his grave and anxious look as he came from the sick-room.

"How is he, doctor?" the boys would ask with bated breath every day.

"Very ill, indeed, boys, very ill," was the usual reply. "You must pray hard for him, for if there is not a change soon all hope will be over."

"May I see him, doctor?" anxiously inquired Frank Stapleton one day.

"Not yet, lad," said the physician kindly. "In his ravings he often calls on Frank—Frank—but always in a kindly tone. No, it would not be safe yet. All you can do is to pray now. In three days, by next Sunday at noon, the crisis will be reached. If he falls asleep then he is safe; if not, he will never recover."

This was indeed sad news for the boys, who, up to this time did not know how dangerously ill Hunter was. Owing to Frank's exertions, nearly all the students of the college received holy communion that Sunday for the delirious boy's recovery. There was an unwonted silence in the yard that morning, for no one had the heart for games when a fellow-student's life lay trembling in the balance.

At eleven o'clock the physician's carriage was at the door, and all waited anxiously for his reappearance from the patient's room. In a little less than an hour he came out. The mute appeal of a crowd of anxious faces touched him deeply. He stepped into his carriage, and was an unusual time in arranging his laprobe before he ventured to speak. Several boys, he noticed, held a pair of beads inclosed in their hands, and each was drawing with the thumb bead after bead over the right finger. It was a piety none the less sincere for being half concealed. In the deepest trouble the heart turns naturally to God.

"That's right, boys," said the doctor, "keep up your prayers. The crisis, I think, is passed, and Hunter has fallen into a gentle doze. Don't wake him by any noise if you can help it. Pray for him, for,

although he is now past the help of my skill, I think he will recover."

In spite of himself, this physician, who had witnessed almost every form of human suffering, when he had finished speaking found the tears rolling down his cheeks. Such is the power of human sympathy, for more than one of the boys were letting theirs flow freely, nor were they ashamed to be seen weeping. A sigh of relief came from many, and from Stapleton in particular, and they went to dinner that day with lighter hearts than they had possessed for many a day.

That afternoon during a long walk, Falvey, Stapleton, Shiller and the others who were implicated in this well-nigh fatal practical joke, agreed, as soon as Hunter could realize what was going on about him, to keep his room supplied with fresh flowers. It was late in the season now and flowers were scarce, but they felt a species of satisfaction in promising to devote a portion of their pocket-money to that purpose.

Hunter mended surely but slowly. It was over two weeks after the crisis had passed before any of the boys were allowed to see him. The fever had sadly wasted him, and all were shocked when they first saw his hollow cheeks and deeply sunken eyes. Long before the boys were allowed to come to his room Hunter had received a full explanation of all the mysterious sounds at the mill, and now his mind was at rest.

"Who sends these beautiful flowers?" he asked on the first visit of the boys.

"Some of the boys," replied Frank; "they thought you would like them."

"Please thank them very much. I have heard all about the hoax at the mill," he continued. This was

a relief to the boys, who did not know whether it would be safe to mention that sad subject.

"There is something, however, which puzzles me yet. What was that white thing I saw glittering past the window?"

"That must have been Falvey in his shirt sleeves," said Shiller. "You know what a dude he is, and that top floor was pretty dusty." Falvey slyly kicked Shiller's shins, in payment.

"Of course," said the convalescent, "I might have thought of that. But there is one more thing I want explained and then everything will be cleared up. Did you catch that baboon, or maniac, whichever it was?"

The visitors looked at one another in amazement. In their bewilderment they began to suspect that Hunter's mind was still wandering.

"Baboon! maniac! what do you mean, Howard?" asked Stapleton.

"I mean that figure I saw on the roof of the mill as we were getting over the wire fence."

The visitors were still mystified. None could offer any explanation.

"Oh! that was me," said Falvey, suddenly, "I was—"

"A maniac, certainly," interposed Stapleton, slyly.

"I was—"

"—but hardly a baboon. Don't you know evolution works the other way?"

"—on the roof just as you fellows left. I thought I heard some one coming up to the top floor, so I climbed up the chimney."

"But that object was covered with brown hair," persisted Hunter.

"Wouldn't this brown undershirt do as well?" said Falvey, and he unbuttoned the wrist-band of his white shirt and showed a brown woolen undergarment.

"But that thing had a black face and white teeth!"

"You would not have pronounced my face particularly white had you seen me closely after I emerged from that chimney. I plead guilty to white teeth."

"Then it was you after all?"

"Yes, I was the ape, or the maniac, if you will. I'm sure I acted like both that day," replied Falvey, regretfully.

A sigh of relief came from Howard Hunter. Everything was now cleared up, and now, the first time for many days and nights, he had no unsolved mystery to torment his brain. After these explanations his recovery was much more rapid, and his companions looked forward, with much impatience, to the time when he would be out of doors again.

It was now near the end of October. One bright, warm, Thursday afternoon the Brother infirmarian thought that Hunter could safely be taken out for a short airing, so he procured the college carriage, and, wrapping the convalescent in a big, warm, woolen shawl, propping him up comfortably with pillows, they started for the ball-field. The day was a magnificent one. The air was soft and the sky overhead a clear pale blue. The sun's rays had lost their summer fierceness, and the landscape was enveloped in the mild blue mist of the typical Indian summer. The large elms were still green, but flecked with yellow, and appeared to be laden with golden fruit. The soft maples and low cypresses around the ball-field resembled flaming torches. It was one of those lovely last days of sum-

mer which one remembers and regrets all through the bleak winter months. The carriage soon attracted attention.

"Here's Howard Hunter out again, hurrah!" shouted somebody. The last match game of the season was suspended at once, and the whole crowd of noisy, healthy boys came flocking around the carriage. All wanted to shake hands with the favorite, who for the first time realized how popular he was.

Frank Stapleton was catching behind the bat when the carriage arrived. With mask, protector, and gloves still on he rushed toward the carriage, and in his delight at seeing his friend out of doors once more, would have wrung his hand almost off had not the watchful Brother interfered. Little Jimmie Branston had a tin trumpet, and in his satisfaction blew it for all he was worth. Noise was what he and nearly all the other boys wanted just then. Everybody seemed happy, but no one appeared to know exactly how to vent his enthusiasm. At last some one proposed three cheers for Hunter. They were given, with a tiger. Then the infirmarian thought it was time to go, and slowly drove away, amid the shouts of the boys.

Mr. Hillson stood watching the ovation with evident satisfaction. He noted that those boys who had been the cause of Hunter's sickness were the most jubilant over his recovery. After the excitement had somewhat died away, and before the game was resumed, the prefect put his hand on Stapleton's shoulder and said:

"Well, Frank?"

"Sir?" said the boy, not quite understanding what was required of him.

"What's the lesson of all this?"

"I don't exactly know, sir, but I'm glad to see Howard out again."

"Of course you are. We are all glad of that, none more so than I. But the lesson I want you to remember is that the maxim 'there's no harm in a joke' is a false one."

"I'm not likely to forget it, sir," replied the boy, earnestly.

CHAPTER VII.

A DARK CHAPTER.

EVENTS often crowd themselves into a short space of time in a boarding college. Every institution of that nature is a little city, has its own polity, its own interests, and its own lights and shades.

For several days soon after Hunter's reappearance among them at St. Cuthbert's, the boys had displayed symptoms of intense but suppressed excitement. They gathered in small groups to discuss some topic of absorbing interest. The prefects watched these proceedings with uneasiness, and, in spite of the fine college spirit prevailing among the boys, they were half inclined to believe that there was some mischief brewing. They occasionally caught snatches of conversation which sorely puzzled them. Mr. Hillson, one day, overheard the following:

"This has to be stopped."

"I shall not stay here if it isn't. Nobody's safe."

"We can lay a trap—get even with him—give him a good dressing-down—"

The prefect was completely in the dark. What could it all mean? When he approached the chattering group all were silent at once, and without appearing to run away, the boys immediately separated. He could not demand an explanation, and the only course open to him was quietly to await events. Ingenuous youths do not, as a rule, keep secrets.

In another part of the yard a different knot of boys were discussing the same subject.

"I wonder what they'll do with him?" said Hunter.

"They must find him out first," replied Stapleton.

"I think it would be better to tell Mr. Hillson, and set a watch," resumed the first speaker.

"For whom? We do not even suspect any one yet, but if I find him out I'll make it hot for him, you may bet on that," said another of the group, maliciously.

It was evident the boys were very much stirred up over some untoward event. The fact was, that for some time past small articles, stamps, and small amounts of money had mysteriously disappeared from different desks in the study hall. It was evident to the boys that there was an uncaught thief in the school.

Each boy had his own desk, which was never locked. There were no locks on the desks. It was the custom for boys to provide themselves with tin lock-boxes, which they kept in their desks, and in which the boys generally left small amounts of money, postage stamps, and such valuables as were not convenient for them to carry on their persons. At first small articles of no particular value were missed. Then two or three boys missed some stamps—about half a dozen from each

box. Little attention was paid to this, because each loser imagined he had mislaid his own and that they would turn up in time. The thief, whoever he was, grown bolder by success, then began to take small sums of money, and finally, on the morning of the events here related, Charlie Pepper had missed a gold fountain pen from his desk.

Whatever were the failings of the St. Cuthbert boys—and the sum total of such was by no means small—dishonesty had never found place among them. Thoughtless and daring, sometimes even to rashness—as Hunter's recent illness proved—there was scarcely one among them that would be so mean as to take what did not belong to him. Open, generous natures do not easily suspect others. Suspicion is something so repugnant to the sunny disposition of boyhood, that the discovery of the theft created consternation.

"I do not so much mind the loss of the pen," said Pepper, "because father will most likely send me another. But I hate that he should know of it, or that there is a thief here, and uncaught."

"What I don't like," said Harry Selby, "is that the college should be disgraced in this way. I'm sure of one thing. It isn't a poor boy who is doing this pilfering."

"Why so?" asked a bystander.

"Oh! because—"

"That's a woman's reason. But why?"

"—such small amounts have been taken. If a poor boy were doing this he would scoop in larger amounts, because, most likely, he would really need the money. I'll bet you that the fellow who is doing this has plenty of money of his own."

The idea seemed reasonable, but unfortunately it added to the difficulty, for there were at the college many more well-to-do boys than poor ones. Some boys bought new lock-boxes to secure themselves against the unknown depredator. For a week no more losses came to light and the excitement over the affair seemed to die out.

Several earnest consultations had been held between the two prefects. The boys thought these two knew nothing of the affair, but in this they were mistaken. By this time they were fairly well acquainted with the facts. In a crowd of over two hundred boys it would be difficult to keep a subject of such common consternation altogether from the prefects.

Both men were agreed in thinking that the thieving had not ceased because it had been discontinued for a time. They were convinced that before long there would probably be an attempt on a much larger scale. They resolved, therefore, if possible, to bring matters to a crisis.

On the following Sunday morning, after Mass, Charlie Pepper, together with Sparkes Evershed, Ed Fern, and Amos Armitage—losers either of money or stamps—were called to the prefect's room. Mr. Hillson blamed them all for not reporting to and confiding in him. To their surprise he then told each how much he had lost, and remarked:

"Never keep anything back from your prefects, boys. We have your interests at heart, and can manage these matters better than you would. You can not do as well without us as with us."

He then told the boys not to talk about the matter, and to discourage all conversation upon it,

"This will lull suspicion, and in the meantime I will give each of you some more stamps which I have marked so that they can be identified. On the Columbian stamps—the one representing the landing of Columbus—I have marked a cross on the banner of the standard bearer to the left of the picture and another on the right shoulder of the doublet of Columbus. These crosses are done in brown ink and none but the sharpest-sighted will notice them if unaware of their existence. On the ordinary red stamps two brown spots have been put at the extremities of the writing around the head, and two small holes have been made between the three words 'United States Postage.' Put them in your desks, boys, and wait results. In the meantime all of us will keep a sharp lookout."

The boys placed the stamps in their boxes as directed, but nothing occurred for several days. The thieving had already ceased to be a subject of general conversation. On the Wednesday of the following week Heshon and Fern both reported that some of their marked stamps were gone. The last study hour of Wednesday evening was given as free time, and most of the boys availed themselves of this opportunity for writing their weekly letters to their parents. There was an unusually large number of letters handed to the prefect of studies that night. It was his duty to inspect them before mailing them. He had been informed of the last theft of the marked stamps, and carefully, one by one, he scrutinized the letters, late into the night. He had passed and sealed all the letters but three, and he was feeling decidedly sleepy after a hard day's work.

Suddenly he was aroused by seeing one of the marked stamps on an envelope before him. The cross on the banner was scarcely discernible, but of the one on the shoulder of Columbus there could be no mistake. With a rather unsteady hand he unfolded the letter, and thirty marked stamps fell out of it. Closer examination removed all doubt. The thief had been discovered at last.

It would be difficult to tell what passed through the mind of Father Lovelace during the next few minutes. A shade of sorrow passed over his kindly face and he sat a long time wrapped in deep thought. The shame for the boy on the morrow! The disgrace of a public expulsion! The horror of the poor father at the discovery that his son was a thief! The agony of a heart-broken mother at finding the son whom she loved so dearly—as only a mother can love—at finding *her* son regarded as an outcast of society and beginning life with a blot on his name! The scorn of it! The horror of it!

Many such thoughts as these passed through his mind as the tell-tale letter lay before him on the table. The kind-hearted priest experienced the strongest repugnance to proceeding any farther in the matter. Could it not be overlooked? Might not something be done by way of compromise, to save the boy from the public disgrace? A momentary revulsion of feeling beset him, in which he was tempted to seal and mail the letter and say nothing to any one. Alas! educators—true educators of youth, do not always tread a path of roses.

The thought, of course, was promptly set aside as a mere temptation, and duty compelled him to proceed

with a task doubly distasteful to him on account of his natural warmth of affection and genuine love for boys, and of his dislike of giving pain. Sick at heart at the thought of the dire consequences to follow, he realized that he had now to perform one of the unpleasantest tasks that had ever fallen to his lot.

He put the stamps where he had found them and immediately knocked at the President's door. Without saying a word, he put the fatal letter into his superior's hand and walked away. The letter would tell its own story all too well.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW THEY CAUGHT HIM.

THE evening of the day on which the prefects were informed that some of the stamps had been stolen, was an anxious one for both. They had, by this time, arrived at the conclusion that the stealing was done at night, so they determined to set a watch for the thief. Living entirely with the boys they had no opportunity of learning of Father Lovelace's discovery until the next day. Stapleton, being the biggest boy in the college, was asked whether he would like to watch outside. He jumped at the chance of an adventure, and it was easy to see that he was delighted at the preference shown him by the prefects. Consequently it was arranged that he should keep watch for the early part of the night, and if nothing occurred should be relieved by Mr. Hillson, who would watch till dawn.

After the lights were turned down in the dormitory Stapleton put on a prefect's big cloak and went out.

He took a position where he could watch the building on the opposite side from the playground. There was no occasion to watch the house on the yard side, as all the windows were protected by thick iron screens as a defense against erratic baseballs, etc.

Running at right angles to the building was an avenue of noble cedar trees, whose branches touched the ground. These beautiful trees bordered the college road which led from the village. Stapleton so stationed himself in one of these trees that he could see the dormitory and study hall windows, which were one above the other, and have a clear view up the road for some distance. There was no moon, but the countless stars overhead gave enough light to distinguish objects many feet away. Up in the valley, behind the college building he was watching, he saw a light burning in a cottage window. He knew a mother was watching there by the bedside of a sick child.

Every window in the college, save one, looked dark, solemn, and lifeless. From the one came out into the darkness a soft crimson glow which he knew came from the little red lamp which, while all else slept, kept its tireless vigil before the Blessed Sacrament in the students' chapel over the dormitory. Everything was motionless around him, and unfamiliar sounds, never heard in the daylight, made him slightly nervous. A late katydid once or twice chirped quite close to him. The sound seemed preternaturally loud to him. From the village, a mile away, came the sound of the barking of a dog, and an owl occasionally hooted gruesomely in a large elm close by. His eyes grew accus-

tomed to the darkness, and he could see distinctly the whole length of the building.

Suddenly he heard a footfall on the gravel some distance up the road. The steps were heavy and uneven. Although now much excited he watched closely, and soon saw a man come up the private road to within a few feet of where he was standing, and then turn off between two cedars and walk diagonally across the lawn toward the dormitory.

The nocturnal visitant waited a moment or two and then gave a low, peculiar whistle, not loud enough to disturb any one sleeping, or excite suspicion in one awake. It was evidently a preconcerted signal to some one inside, and resembled the howling of the wind around a many-gabled house. Who could the confederate inside be? There was no response to the signal, and then the man took up a handful of sand, and threw it at one of the dormitory windows, skilfully spreading it over several panes of glass. He then waited, perfectly motionless, and Stapleton saw the window raised a few inches and something white flutter down, about the size of a sheet of note paper. It was a recognition from some one inside. In about half a minute the window was raised and a head thrust out.

"Come, youngster, hurry. I can't stay here all night," came the muffled growl from the man below.

Cautiously a big boy got out on the window sill and then, by an adroit swing, grasped the large waterpipe, and, nimbly as a cat, let himself down, hand over hand, to the ground.

"Now, boy, have ye done what I told ye?" asked the man, who seemed to have the boy completely under

his control. His head and face were hidden by a large slouch hat, only a scrubby beard being visible to the watcher in the cedar tree.

"Have I done what?" asked the boy.

"Done what! You know what. You know when I began supplying you with the 'stuff' I told ye one customer was not enough for the risk. You've got to get me more customers, d'ye hear?"

"Hush, man, hush! don't talk so loud. Don't I pay you well for what I get from you?"

"I don't say you do, and I don't say you don't. That's neither here nor there. But I want to increase my business and *you've* got to help me. I can't afford to have my house searched for whisky by all I make out o' ye."

"Then you'll have to wait. I can't get any of those fellows to go in with me. I've tried several. They are all so confoundedly pious. But what have you got to-night?"

"Just a pint o' the best tangle-foot that ever open'd an eye," leered the villain, as he did the devil's work, showing a bottle filled with some brown liquor.

"How much?"

"This is extra proof, but I only charge ye a dollar for it."

"O, come, Smith, you know that's robbery. It's worth about thirty cents."

"Reckon *you* knows more about robbery than I do," said the ruffian.

The boy winced, but replied:

"Well, who showed me how to do it? Who taught me how to open those lock-boxes? Who taught me to—"

"And who promised," interrupted the other, "if I did, he would bring me lots o' *very respectable customers?*"

This was a home thrust, and the scoundrel Smith was about to follow up the advantage, but he suddenly bethought himself that perhaps he might be going too far. He felt sure of his victim, and he knew that he could bleed him for almost any amount of money, yet he realized, by an instinct of selfishness, that there was danger in pushing him too far. He therefore changed his tone.

"See here, boy, I don't want to be too hard on ye. Ye know ye needn't pay me in money. Anything else will do. Don't your swell students wear gold rings and pins and things of that sort? I ain't particular. I could handle a good watch, now, with advantage to both of us."

"Why don't you go in *there* then?" replied the unfortunate boy, sullenly, at the same time pointing to the study hall. "You can help yourself. There's lots of valuables in the desks."

"*Very* much obliged! Don't particularly care to be up on a charge of burglary. Oh, no! Excuse *me*. Besides, *you* must do the liftin' if I supply the *courage*. And what's more, young fellow, that bill o' yourn is getting pretty high. I should advise you to take another look through them desks to-night. I want my money, or its equivalent, by to-morrow night, and I'm going to have it, too," said the man doggedly.

"I wish to heaven I had never seen you," said the tortured boy.

"Oh! don't wish that now. Our acquaintance *so* far has been most agreeable—*most* agreeable. Hope it'll

last, I'm sure, but one can't tell what things may happen these times."

The boy saw and understood the implied threat. He realized how deeply he was in the toils of this unprincipled villain, who could at any moment expose and ruin him, yet he felt no sense of shame. His moral nature, by continually outraging it, had been so blunted that the dishonor of thieving no longer even vexed him. He was annoyed now only because he saw he had to do the bidding of this man in whose power he knew and felt himself to be.

"Very well," he said sullenly, "I'll get in there to-night. I think I know where there is a good silver watch."

"Now you're talking. I thought you would soon see it in the right way. I'll go now and get a short ladder."

CHAPTER IX.

FOUND OUT.

A FEW more sentences passed between them, but they were unheard by the amateur detective in the cedar tree. All this time he could not make out who the boy was; he had heard enough, however, to assure himself that the thief could now be caught in the act. He determined to arouse Mr. Hillson. Just as he was moving out of the dark shadows of the branches he stepped on a dry twig, which cracked loudly in the still night air. It was an unfortunate accident, and scared the two plotters.

"S-s-h! what's that?" said the boy in a frightened whisper.

"Oh! I guess it's nothing," replied his companion. "Only a cat in the tree yonder after a bird."

Notwithstanding this explanation, the two cowards immediately dropped flat on the ground, and remained perfectly motionless for some time. After awhile the elder cautiously raised his head and looked around. Discovering nothing, he slowly and carefully sat up, and finally rose to his feet, and Stapleton saw him, after a little hesitation, start for the ladder, and he, himself, without further mishap, hurried around the building and into the house, and gave Mr. Hillson notice of his successful watching.

"Mr. Hillson, sir, come down quickly to the study hall. Put on your list slippers, sir, and bring your pocket lamp," said Stapleton, as he aroused Mr. Hillson from a light doze. The prefect had not undressed, but was lying on his bed. He arose and followed the boy at once.

Inside the study hall it was quite dark. Many great-coats were hanging from pegs around the walls. The two amateur detectives had scarcely arrived when they heard the ladder raised against one of the window sills.

"Wait, and I'll see what I can get you," whispered the young burglar.

"Oh! no. One is better than two at a job like this. See you to-morrow night; so long," and the watchers heard the cowardly accomplice make off in the direction he had come.

The dishonest boy dropped lightly to the floor, and seemed to be devoid of nervousness or anxiety. Pre-

vious incursions of the same nature had evidently rendered him familiar with strange or unusual sounds. The creaking of the floor, or a light colored coat on the wall, or a piece of paper moved by the wind, which occasionally startled both of the watchers, failed to affect the boy in the least. He appeared to know which desks were likely to contain anything of value, and went straight to these. Lid after lid was lifted quietly and as quietly put down. Once the lid of a desk slipped from his fingers when nearly closed. It made a report, which in the day-time would scarcely be noticed, but which in the still night hours seemed as loud as a pistol-shot.

"S-s-shoh," hissed from the young burglar. The sound he emitted was not indicative of fright, but merely of annoyance. For a few minutes he remained perfectly motionless, listening to see if the concussion had disturbed any one in the dormitory above. Hearing no stir there, he continued his nefarious work. At length he reached a desk within a few feet of where the prefect was standing, and there he found what he was searching for.

"Ha! the silver watch!" he whispered hoarsely. Closing the desk he held the watch in his hand and began to chuckle quietly. The watch was a new silver one lately sent to one of the boys as a birthday present.

The prefect saw it was now time to act. He moved noiselessly up behind the boy, and with his left hand suddenly made a firm grasp at his coat collar, while with his right he struck an instantaneous light from his little, magic pocket-lamp.

"Caught at last," said the prefect, as he held the light to the boy's face.

"Oh! oh! my God!" was all the frightened thief could utter. His lips continued to move, but no sound came from them.

At the moment of the capture Stapleton came forward. Unfortunately, the little lamp with which he had been supplied would not work well. He kept clicking the spring that turned the little disk of matches under the steel finger, but none would ignite. The lamp, when the lid was closed, resembled a large sized silver match box. Hearing the clicking, and in the gloom seeing something that looked like a pistol barrel, the boy screamed out: "Oh! don't! don't! don't fire! I confess everything, only spare my life! Yes, yes, I did it all!"

"Who helped you?" demanded the prefect sternly.

"None of the boys, sir, I swear. Oh, don't fire at me, Stapleton; don't, don't!"

The dim light of the small lamp flickered over the boy's livid face. He trembled violently. At that moment he was a picture of incarnate terror. Mr. Hillson's pity began to turn to contempt.

"Be at least a man. Don't act the poltroon as well as the thief. We do not carry fire-arms. Your life is in no danger."

This gave the craven-hearted fellow some assurance, and he began to offer stupid excuses for his conduct. He was told to say nothing until daylight, when he would have a chance to be heard. As nothing further could be done that night, it was decided not to awaken the President or Father Lovelace. The thief was put in charge of a burly Brother, with strict orders to allow him to see or speak to no one.

"Never mind now, Brother, what he has been

doing," said the prefect, in answer to a look of inquiry from that worthy. "You will learn that soon enough to-morrow. He will hardly tell you himself. Keep him safe, that's all."

The weary but satisfied watchers then retired to catch a few hours' sleep, well pleased with their night's work.

CHAPTER X.

EXIT THE THIEF.

ALMOST as soon as the big bell had tolled its solemn warning to rise, Mr. Hillson sought Father Lovelace and the President. Great was the astonishment of the two priests when they learned of the previous night's capture. On the other hand, Father Lovelace's story of the stamps was a genuine surprise for the prefect. The President, who usually was the most gentle and courteous of men, without the least sign of imperiousness, and lovable to all, who would frequently follow another's advice in preference to his own idea, and who had never been known to hurt another's feelings but always preferred to err on the side of leniency—was, in this case, as firm as adamant. No persuasion could induce him to adopt any other measure than that of a public expulsion.

While the boys were at Mass that morning the culprit was compelled to unlock his trunk. It was found, as expected, to contain a number of purloined articles. Two gold pins, a ring, a pair of Acme skates, several

books from the students' library, and many little trinkets, were there stowed away.

Thus far the developments of the last twelve hours were unknown to the students. Stapleton had not risen yet, and before going to bed he had been told to say nothing the next morning. At the morning studies before class the boys were surprised to see the President walk into the study hall of the large boys' division of St. Cuthbert's. He looked unusually grave, and his mild and gentle face wore a look of pain.

The boys intuitively realized that something of very great importance must have occurred for him to pay them a visit and especially thus early in the day. What could it be? Could there be a denouement coming? Had the *thief* been caught? The President walked slowly up the hall to the study-keeper's desk and waited a moment for silence. Marks of emotion were plainly visible on his mild and gentle face. Those who, that day, saw the Reverend President will never forget him. Although he has long ago gone to his final reward, the memory of those telling words to which he gave utterance will remain with those who heard them all their days. The speaker may lie low in his last resting-place, but the living sentences he then uttered live on in the hearts of many.

"It is my painful duty," he began slowly, with a tremor in his voice, "to have to perform a very unpleasant task to-day. Many of you know that for some time past small losses have occurred among you. Money, stamps, and other small articles have been missing. When these occurrences were first reported to me I was inclined to believe the losers had been careless, and had lost what was supposed to have been

stolen. It soon became evident, however, that this was not the case. Reluctantly I was compelled to believe there was a thief among you. A thief! One from whom no one is safe! It was impossible to accuse any one unless I had positive proof of his guilt. This has been obtained all too amply."

There was intense excitement among the boys, that breathless excitement which waits to catch the next words to fall from the speaker's lips.

"Through the vigilance of one among you," continued the President, "the dishonest boy was caught last night, in this study hall; actually caught in the act of stealing a silver watch. While you were at Mass this morning this dishonest boy's trunk was searched and many stolen articles were found concealed there."

There was a murmur of suppressed excitement.

"And now, boys, while, as I see, you despise such dishonesty with all your hearts, you must charitably pray for the reform of the thief. O, the shame of it, the disgrace of it, but, worst of all, the sinfulness of it! Think of the sorrow in at least one family this morning. Is it not enough to bring that mother's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave? Boys, let this be a warning against drinking, for a taste for ardent spirits led this boy to the commission of these crimes. Acquire a habit in youth and it will take a miracle to break it in after years. You ask, perhaps, why I expel the boy. I do it for your sakes and for the credit of the college. We could never knowingly allow a thief to associate with our students. He must go from us branded, marked with infamy. You ask who he is? There he is. There is the thief—Gideon Deming."

Just at that moment the Brother in charge of the

culprit opened the study hall door and brought in the unfortunate boy. With a spontaneous movement every boy rose to his feet. Some stood on chairs and those further away actually stood upon their desks to catch a glimpse of him.

And Gideon Deming? He stood there the center of an unenviable attraction, in an amphitheater of excited faces. Every pair of indignant eyes told him plainly that he was a condemned culprit at the bar of public opinion. Had he expected such a degradation? Ah, no! He knew well that if he were caught he would be sent home, but not in such an ignominious manner as this. For a moment, but for a moment only, he tried bravado, but a host of indignant eyes was more than he could endure. His head drooped on his breast, his arms hung listlessly down, his body seemed actually bent with shame. He stood there before them all, a picture of helpless, hopeless, almost pitiable, ignominy.

As he was leaving the room, the restrained feelings of the boys found relief in a prolonged, vigorous hiss. He tried to say a few words, but no one would listen. It was remarked afterward that at that time he did not lisp, and Stapleton also remembered that during his conversation with his accomplice no lisp had been observable, and so it was generally agreed that all along his lisp had been an assumed one, although for what purpose it was not clear. His career at St. Cuthbert's had been a short one, lasting a little over three months.

Thus with his companions' audible disapprobation tingling in his ears and rankling in his memory; with the confusion of his downfall full upon him; with the

sense of utter shame; with the dread of meeting a mortified and angered father at home, exit Deming. Exit, from all that was good and bright and desirable in his life; exit, from the purest and best influences to which he was ever subject; exit, from the charm of manly and pure hearts; from possible lifelong and deathless friendships; from unsullied—aye, holy—acquaintances and ennobling influences; from so much that was bright and good and joyous, and, alas! from opportunities forever lost.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW HARRY WON THE CLASS OUTING.

“BALL up, ball up there, ball up,” came the imperious cry, ringing across the playground of St. Cuthbert’s college. The boys were enjoying the outdoor exercise of the first warm spring day. Baseballs were flying in all directions, resembling a network above the boys’ heads. Some were passing the ball back and forth at short distances with wonderful rapidity. Others were trying in and out curves for the coming season. Many, in all directions, were simply catching, and had no particular end in view beyond the immediate enjoyment, while others were practising the long throw for outfielding. All were active and enthusiastic, and appeared to be thoroughly enjoying themselves, making the most of a few precious minutes before the great bell tolled for studies.

The setting sun sent bright yellow rays across the yard, and seemed to idealize those active, vigorous youths, lending an additional grace to their lithe forms and rapid movements, while the soft air and the bluest of skies sent the blood tingling afresh through their veins, and suffused their cheeks with the rosy flush of health.

"I believe," said the prefect to himself, as he watched the ball-throwing, "that if a ball rolled past the President of the United States, or the Cardinal, or even the Pope himself, were he here, Young America would issue his supreme command of 'Ball up,' and I pity the man who valued the esteem of these boys, should he refuse to obey," and with an amused smile he continued his walk.

The particular ball which occasioned the opening words of this chapter had been thrown the length of the yard, and, the catcher having missed it, it had rolled up to the infirmary steps.

Howard Hunter, who, after his long illness the previous fall, had frequently been on the sick list with severe headaches, was sitting on the infirmary steps enjoying the warmth of the atmosphere. He saw the ball near him, but hesitated whether to stoop and pick it up or leave it alone.

"Ball up, ball up! Ball up there!" again shouted Harry Selby, who had missed catching it. The convalescent still hesitated. He had been in the infirmary for a week, and had been ordered perfect quiet, and his hesitation was caused by the fact that he was not inclined to move quickly just at present, as any violent movement brought back the pain.

"Here, throw up that ball, will you?" shouted

Selby, considerably vexed that the unwritten boys'-law was not complied with.

"See here: throw up that ball, or I'll—"

He did not finish, for just at that moment Mr. Hillson, the prefect of the yard, appeared and picked up the ball himself. He did not throw it, but with a very low bow handed it to Harry Selby, saying:

"Your servant is unwell, so I trust your generosity will overlook his disobedience. I hasten to fulfil your commands in his place," and then with another bow of sarcasm he walked away.

Harry Selby felt the reproof keenly, for he was not in general an impolite boy. He blushed deeply as he took the ball. He raised his hat to the prefect, and, instead of continuing his play, put the ball in his pocket and sat down on a bench. Mr. Hillson saw that his words had taken effect, but Harry felt them more keenly than the prefect perhaps intended.

A few minutes later the prefect appeared with a large bundle of letters. Whoever has seen the distribution of the daily mail at a large boarding college will easily understand the effect his presence created. Every game was suspended in an instant. All made a rush toward the bearer of the precious missives from the dear ones at home. While this important business of distributing the daily mail is being transacted, let us introduce the reader to the boy who has just received a lesson in good manners.

Harry Selby was the son of a wealthy railroad man, well known throughout the country not only for his business tact and shrewdness and his irreproachable honesty, but, what was still better, for his sterling practical Catholicity. Strict with his children, he was also

not only their father, but their friend. While fully alive to the value of educating the mind, he set much more store on the qualities of the heart. He believed the heart should rule the head, and not the head the heart. Yet, with all this, he wished that his boys should be trained to think and act for themselves. "If the heart is right," he would say, "the head will not be far wrong."

Harry Selby had passed his seventeenth birthday. He was of fair height for his age, with good square shoulders, and lithe and supple as an eel. His high, broad forehead was crowned with black, wavy hair, and his steel black eyes would snap and sparkle in a minute either with fun or indignation. His features were clean cut and his face was graced with an incipient mustache over which he spent much time, probably on the principle that growing industries need fostering. Being a neat dresser and of a generous disposition, he was one of the most popular boys of the college.

For some days he had been revolving a scheme in his mind, upon the success of which he had set his heart. His father owned a large summer villa at Silver Lake, Wisconsin, and Harry had formed a plan to invite his classmates for a two weeks' summering there. The villa was in one of the wildest and most picturesque portions of the State, and to healthy college lads it afforded opportunities for boating, fishing, swimming, and hunting to an almost unlimited extent. Harry had already written to ask his father's consent, and he awaited his reply with considerable nervousness.

"Harry Selby," rang out the voice of Mr. Hillson. The letter was handed over the heads of the boys to Harry, who was on the outside of the crowd.

"Howard Hunter," again called the prefect.

"I'll take it to him, sir," said Harry, and held up his hand for the invalid's letter. There was a momentary trace of hesitation in Mr. Hillson's face, and then he handed the letter to Harry, and with a significant look said:

"Very well, Selby; take it to the infirmary to Hunter."

The prefect felt sure the boy would make some generous reparation.

Harry found Hunter lying on his back with a wet towel across his forehead. There was a look of acute suffering on his face. The big, strong fellow felt thoroughly ashamed of himself when he remembered that his rudeness had probably been the cause of additional suffering to the sick boy. Boy-like, he blurted out:

"Say, Howard, I forgot you were sick with a headache again, and I ought to be kicked, and here's a letter for you, and I'm a brute."

"That's all right, Harry," was the somewhat ambiguous reply. "What! a letter from home!" and Hunter arose from his reclining position, and in a moment was devouring the contents of the letter in a manner that only a boy away from home can do. Harry left the sick-room, and was soon oblivious to everything save the contents of the wished for, but somewhat dreaded letter, from his father.

The letter was a long one, and inquired closely into the motive of the request for the summer outing for his son's class. The father told the boy to examine himself to see whether the motive was a sound one. Should Harry convince himself that his motive in asking the permission was a correct one, he was to consider the

permission as given. There was, however, one condition at the end of the letter, which, when the boy read it, sent a cold shiver down his back, as he afterward declared.

It ran as follows:

"I must, however, make one stipulation. Hitherto the reports sent me by the faculty have been, in general, satisfactory, although your class standing is not as high as I wish it to be. It would be folly on my part to throw away money on one who does not make *full* use of the advantages the money purchases for him. Now, here is the condition upon which my permission is granted. I do not expect you to be at the top of your class in your next competitive examination in April, but unless you reach ninety notes out of a possible hundred, you must consider your application refused. I need not urge upon you the necessity of study now, seeing that the success of your plan rests in your own hands."

Harry had set his heart on this outing for his class, and he lost no time in answering his father's letter, assuring him that the best motives had actuated him. His letter closed in this way:

"As sure as the sun rises to-morrow, my class will be at the villa next vacation. To-morrow is the first Friday, and I am going to holy communion with the intention that I may be successful in my next competition. God bless you for a dear, good (the very best), kind, loving father. Love to mamma. Hurrah for Silver Lake!"

The next morning Harry Selby met Mr. Hillson in the yard, and was greeted with a cheery—

"Good morning, Harry."

"Good morning, sir," said the boy, somewhat shamefacedly.

Mr. Hillson had heard of the boy's apology to Hunter, and was quite satisfied with his conduct. For special reasons he did not wish to speak of it then, so he simply ignored the incident, and was soon discussing plans with Selby for organizing the baseball league for the season. Harry was a leader in all games, and his superior thought of making him captain of the first nine this year. He was genuinely surprised when he heard Selby say:

"I don't wish to be captain this year, sir, and I don't think I shall play much ball for a month to come."

"What? what does this mean, my boy? You are not punishing yourself for your slight fault of last night? 'Make the punishment fit the crime,'" he continued, unconsciously quoting a line from the Mikado. Harry in the meantime was fumbling in his pocket for his father's letter. He had confidence in Mr. Hillson, and regarded him rather as an elder brother than as one having a certain authority over him, at the same time retaining his respect for him as a religious, and as his superior.

"Mr. Hillson, sir, if you'll read this it will explain matters better than I can, sir," and he handed the precious letter to the prefect nervously.

There was silence for a few minutes, and Harry stood nervously twirling his baseball cap. Mr. Hillson opened his eyes to their widest extent when he learned of the sacrifice the boy was about to make, and for a few seconds there was something large in his throat. Let any boy who reads these pages, seriously

reflect what it means to give up a month of baseball at the beginning of the season! The prefect had been a boy once, and he still retained much of his youthful ardor for all manly sports. Few were better judges of boy character, and certainly no one was better able to realize the sacrifice that Selby proposed to himself.

"Go, and God bless you, my boy," was all he could safely utter just then, and the two parted with a higher esteem for each other than ever before.

Harry kept to the resolution he had made, and for a whole month he scarcely touched a bat except during the short recesses. His resolution not to play ball was a nine days' wonder, and some of the boys thought Selby had "wheels." His professor, as well as the study-keepers, noticed a change in his habits. He had become more studious, diligent, and painstaking. They were pleased, but did not venture to praise too quickly.

April passed, and Harry Selby, for the first time in his life, found time go too rapidly for him. The last competition was over, and now on the third of May the boys were all gathered in the large hall of the college to hear their class standing and witness the distribution of premiums to those who had gained high notes. Harry was seated in the middle of the hall. He was intensely nervous. Hitherto he had received no intimation of his position in his class. Only he and Mr. Hillson, of all there, realized how much depended for a dozen boys at least, on the announcements of the next few minutes. The prefect of studies had already read out the standing of the class immediately above that of poetry, and there was the usual disturbance while the successful boys marched to the platform where the President of St. Cuthbert's fastened medals or ribbons

of distinction on the breasts of those who had won them.

Then the prefect of studies began again, "Class of Poetry—Howard Hunter, 97, James Dolson, 96, Harry Selby, 96—" Harry's heart gave a great bound. The next instant he had sent up an aspiration of thanksgiving. But what was that? The list wrong? Some mistake? Harry held his breath. The Father read the name a second time, and then paused and looked vexed. Could there be a mistake in the notes after all? The prefect evidently thought so. "Harry Selby," he said for the third time, and then read out more deliberately—"ninety-four."

A rapid telegraphic glance passed between Harry and Mr. Hillson, as the former wiped the beads of perspiration from his face. The prefect was almost as much interested as the boy, and his rapid glance was one of encouragement and congratulation. Harry was safe now, for the names of the class had been read and the boys began to move forward. But what if it had been eighty-four instead? He couldn't answer that question, and there being no reason why he should, he did not try. Soon his spirits recovered from the fright he had received, and, asking leave of absence for a few minutes, he ran down-stairs, seized a telegraph blank, and wired to his father:

"Ninety-four—'Rah for the outing—Harry."

In less than an hour he received a despatch from his father's office:

"Congratulations. *Labor vincit omnia.* H. H. S."

And this is how Harry Selby won the outing for his class.

CHAPTER XII.

THE STOLEN MADONNA.

THE test to which Harry Selby had been subjected by his father before he could bring his project of a class outing to a successful issue had the effect, now that his companions were all under his father's roof at the villa, of making him thoroughly realize the difficulties which he had surmounted. After the great peril of the class standing had been passed there were many smaller difficulties to overcome. The majority of his companions readily and delightedly accepted the generous invitation, but it so happened that there were two boys whom Harry found it very difficult to invite. Claude Winters was by no means poor, and Selby was particularly anxious not to appear to bestow a charity on him. Clarence Alvero was from South America, and, while not lacking ample funds, was high-strung and sensitive, and always decidedly averse to any appearance of being patronized.

After much thought, the kind-hearted Harry at last approached Claude Winters, and, not without some interior trepidation, revealed to him his whole plan.

"Claude," said Harry, as they lay in the shade at the edge of the ball-field watching the play, "I have a plan for the holidays which is very dear to me, in fact, I've set my heart on it—and I sincerely hope you will help me make a success of it."

Winters immediately assumed a mock judicial attitude. "Reveal, arch-schemer. Let me see. It can't be dynamite. That's too dangerous. Hazing the new-

comers next year. That's beneath you. Perhaps you wish to depose the President, or want me to join you in a course of Hebrew, or to make a flying machine, or to—"

Harry laughingly headed him off, and he began nervously to divulge his plan for the vacation. Claude Winters listened attentively, and visions of yachting, fishing, and swimming, away up in the cool northern lakes, floated before his imagination. Suddenly a cloud passed over his tell-tale face, and he became silent. Harry saw what was passing in his mind. To Claude it was not a question of expense, but he was very uncertain of securing his father's consent. Harry Selby began with an outward composure he was far from feeling:

"You know, Claude, I should not have asked you to come if it would cost you much for traveling. My father can procure passes for us all, and we have plenty of horses. Under these conditions will you not do—do me the favor—of coming? It would be a bitter disappointment to me if you or Clarence were to refuse."

Winters saw and appreciated the delicacy with which Selby made the invitation, and he felt that he could not without churlishness refuse it. He finally accepted, arranging, however, to go on the second Monday in July, providing his father granted the permission.

"That is just about the time I had arranged," said Harry. "Of course, everybody must bang his own fire-crackers under his own vine and fig tree on the glorious Fourth. Then you'll come? You're a brick," and Selby jumped up and hurried away to try his luck with Alvero, whose consent was soon won by the young

diplomat "just to make it a class affair, you know," he said.

Thus all the difficulties had been overcome, and now the boys had already spent one night under the hospitable roof of The Oaks at Silver Lake.

Mr. and Mrs. Selby met all the boys together for the first time at breakfast. Harry's mother, while willing to humor her son in this particular instance, had secretly feared a species of Tartar invasion of her beautiful house. She was delighted, however, to find her son's companions to be a set of polite young gentlemen, who, while they were hardly equal to the restraints of the more rigid etiquette, were self-possessed and with little apparent nervousness, and none of that awkwardness usually found in big boys. Little need be said of the breakfast table. Mrs. Selby was a sensible woman, and had recognized and provided for the demands of appetite in growing boys. In a few minutes all were perfectly at home with her, and all felt as if they had known her all their lives. Her hair was quite gray, and the coif of lace she wore gave her a matronly appearance. Lines of sorrow had marked her face, for she had laid to rest two grown sons and one baby daughter. Harry and two small boys, Willie and Francis—both too young as yet to go to school—comprised her family.

Breakfast being over, all retired to the lawn, where, under large oaks, rustic seats were scattered about. Mr. Selby soon appeared, and the visitors "took" to him at once. He wore white side-whiskers cut rather short, and long gray hair floating down over his coat collar, making a rather odd mixture, combining an appearance of keen shrewdness and of almost venerable

age. But the boys noticed that he had a merry twinkle in his eyes. He was not an old man, but business cares, reverses of fortune in early life, and the loss of three children, had left their mark on his face and silvered his hair. Troubles had not, however, chilled the warmth of his heart, nor frozen his cheery smile, nor checked his hearty laugh.

"It is scarcely necessary," he said, as soon as all were seated in easy-chairs, "to say you are heartily welcome. I regret I can not remain with you and become a boy again for a time. All I can say is, that if you do not enjoy yourselves on the 'Enchanted Island' it will be your own fault. There is good fishing, and any number of boats," and with a kindly smile he left them.

The delighted boys fully enjoyed the scene. Nature and art had conspired to beautify the place. Luxuriant trees, rich in variety and in foliage, covered the island, while beneath them the short grass was as fine as that of a lawn. The grounds in front of the villa were embellished with beds of beautiful geraniums interspersed with foliage plants of the richest reds, browns, and variegated colors. Fresh beauties gave delight at every turn. Here a shady dell in all the luxuriance of mid-summer foliage; there a vine-covered ravine. Anon were discovered in out-of-the-way places, rustic seats beneath spreading oaks, and again a dip in the land revealed a miniature amphitheater, with the coolest of silent pools, upon whose placid surface the golden-eyed water lilies floated in queenly grace.

Then the glorious lake! Was there ever such a fairy scene? The shore was dotted with summer villas, many of which lay hidden in the thick, dark foliage,

their locations merely indicated above the sea of rich verdure by some tall flag-pole proudly floating its red meteor to the breeze, or by the circular fan of some airy windmill.

Several islands lent variety to the scene and added to the beauty of the motionless waters at their feet, and one larger than the rest cast its deep reflection on the water immediately in front of The Oaks, reminding one of the opening lines of Hood's poem, "The Two Swans:"

"I knew a tower builded on a lake,
With inverse shadow dark and deep."

This morning the lake was calm and smooth as a mirror, and as the visitors watched its glory the silence remained unbroken. Each, in his own way, was drinking in his enjoyment of the scene. Presently Howard Hunter broke the spell by remarking:

"In such a glorious spot as this no wonder a fellow is good. How mad a man must be to say that chance produced a scene like this."

He seemed to be talking to himself, and a delicate flush of enthusiasm suffused his cheeks. The spirit that animated him appeared contagious, for in the same low, earnest tone, Dolson replied:

"The fool hath said in his heart there is no God; and Scripture says it was a *fool* who said it."

"Certainly no one but a fool *would* say it in a place like this," replied Hunter.

Who shall say that a generous-minded and pure, Catholic, college boy is not capable of the loftiest thoughts? His training, the atmosphere in which he lives, are conducive to the formation of the very loftiest

ideals, and none but a misanthrope would say that such were incompatible with a genuine love of frolic or skill in sports.

The other visitors seemed impressed, both by the scene before them and the conversation, and it would be difficult to see where it would have led had not Mr. Selby's colored coachman come up at that moment and broken the spell.

"Scuse me, Marse 'Arry, but de boss, before he drove away, sed mebbe yous young gents would like to ride in the steam yot 'round de lake, so I'se just steamed up, an' I'se ready if yous is," and Sam's teeth glistened in anticipation of a good time.

All made a rush for the steamer and were soon on board. They had just steamed past the house, waving their hats to Mrs. Selby on the porch, when one of the boys shouted excitedly:

"Look, look, boys! What's that, Harry?"

Harry Selby looked in the direction indicated, but saw nothing unusual.

"What's the matter? What do you see?" he asked.

"Why," said Alvero, excitedly, "it's a beautiful shrine with a lovely statue. O Harry! don't pass it. Steer that way and let's see."

Harry Selby steered the steamer as close to land as it was safe to go, and this is what the delighted boys saw. At the base of a steep bank, close to the water's edge, stood a magnificent linden tree, just then in full bloom. Its delicious perfume attracted hundreds of bees so that the music of their wings could be heard many yards away, while their rapid flitting to and fro made it appear as if the tree were receiving a shower of gold. A portion of the tree's roots was above the

ground, and loving hands had made an excavation, in which grotto a most artistic Lourdes statue had been placed. Steps had been made down the side of the hill, and the approach had been beautified by planting many small trees, while the water's edge was thick with clustering wild grape-vines. It was a lovely shrine, and a fitting adornment to a Catholic gentleman's grounds.

The boys on the steam launch were delighted with their discovery, and instinctively raised their hats when opposite the shrine. Harry Selby explained that he had not shown them the place before, as he had intended it for a pleasant surprise that evening, when it was to be illuminated for their gratification. It was not convenient to land, so the boys satisfied their devotion by singing two verses of the Ave Maris Stella, and proceeded on their journey.

The novelty of their position put the students in high spirits and almost drove the idea of fishing from their heads. They visited every cove and bay of the lake, and so keen was their enjoyment that they had actually almost forgotten the hamper. Later in the afternoon they reached a fine fishing-ground, and succeeded in catching a very fair string of fish. They arrived home just in time to change for supper, tired, happy, and hungry from their first day's outing.

Willie and Francis Selby, aged seven and nine respectively, had by dint of coaxing obtained permission to illuminate the shrine after dark. It was arranged that when all was ready the guests were to repair there and say the litany of the Blessed Virgin and their night-prayers. The little fellows anxiously awaited the gloaming, to begin their task. They had not gone

long when Francis rushed back to his mother in great excitement. A whispered colloquy ensued, in which Mrs. Selby was observed to become quite agitated. Evidently something quite unusual had happened. After a few more whispered words to Francis she said aloud to her eldest son:

"Harry, my son, when you visited the shrine this morning did you land and take the statue in the boat with you?"

"Indeed, no, mother. We should not think of doing such a thing."

"It is very strange," continued the lady. "Francis tells me that it is not in the grotto."

"Not in the grotto!" chorused all simultaneously.

"Harry," said his mother, "perhaps the children are mistaken after all. You had better go down and see for yourself."

Harry rushed down the narrow path to the water's edge, followed by all his guests. By the aid of a torch they discovered traces of a boat's keel on the shore, but the beautiful statue was nowhere to be found. It had been stolen.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO REPAIR THE LOSS.

THERE was much consternation and no little indignation at The Oaks when it was definitely learned that the precious image of Our Lady of Lourdes had been stolen from the grotto under the linden tree. Scores

of conjectures were advanced—some, it is to be feared, not over charitable. All the servants were closely questioned whether they had seen any strangers around the place that day.

There was a large hotel in one of the bays of the lake about half a mile from the location of the shrine, and the conclusion was at length arrived at that probably some transient stranger had perpetrated the deed. To the suggestion that perhaps some of the country folk had taken the statue, Mrs. Selby would not listen. "They are too honest and simple," she said, "to do such a thing, and then a large proportion of them are Catholics. Such an idea to me seems preposterous."

The visitors and their hostess discussed the event late into the night. Before retiring both Harry and his mother observed that among their guests there were frequent whispered conversations. Mrs. Selby hoped the boys would do nothing rash—nothing that would bring discredit upon themselves or on her.

The next morning the excitement was as high as ever among the visitors at The Oaks, and the eleven guests began to behave in a very curious manner. Mysterious signs and nods and winks passed between them. Harry Selby noticed it and began to feel uneasy. Something, he thought, in the shape of trouble was brewing, and he was not let into the secret. The boys—his college companions—appeared constrained in his presence. He was perfectly at sea regarding their curious behavior. A thought flashed across his mind that perhaps his classmates were tired of being at the villa and were meditating flight. Mrs. Selby, also, saw the peculiar state of affairs. Her woman's tact told her at once that her guests were trying to

get rid of Harry, although for what reason she could not conjecture. Trusting to the boys' honor she decided to further their plans, whatever they might be. Approaching the group who were standing by the fountain on the lawn, she said:

"I am sorry to be obliged to take Harry away for a short time. I have an important letter that must catch the nine o'clock train. Harry, please tell Sam to bring your pony around at once."

A look of gratitude from several boys followed her remark, convincing her that she had guessed correctly. What they intended to do she had not the remotest idea, "but," she argued, "they are good boys and can safely be trusted."

No sooner were the eleven students left to themselves than they appeared to resolve themselves into a committee of the whole, every one claiming the privilege of the floor. At length, seeing that nothing could be done when all talked and none listened, Howard Hunter assumed the position of temporary chairman, and eventually succeeded in reducing the little gathering to a semblance of order.

"See here, boys," he began, as soon as he had obtained attention, "this theft is a bad affair, and we can all see how much it has vexed Harry's mother. Now, what I propose is this. Let us take boats and search every camp around the lake, and see if we can not recover the statue."

"Out of the question," said Tom Ames, the oldest member of the class. "What authority have we for doing that? Such a course requires a search warrant; besides, it would be insulting, and I'm sure Mr. Selby wouldn't sanction it."

The others saw at once the futility of such a course.

"What can we do then?" asked the crestfallen chairman.

"I have it! Eureka!" shouted Winters. "Look here, boys, we have the smallest chance to get that statue back. No doubt but it's at the bottom of the lake by this time. If taken for spite it is sure to be destroyed. The rascally thief can not make any money out of it, because no one would buy it."

Winters spoke rapidly, and with excitement. Pausing for breath, he looked around to see how the others were listening, and then continued:

"The only chance of its being returned would be that some small boy, without realizing what he was doing, took it away, and the older members of his family would force him to return it. The chances are one in a thousand that we shall ever see the statue again. Now what I propose is this. Let's send to Chicago for another, and put it in the grotto before our host and hostess know anything about it. It's lucky Harry has gone to the village, or he'd kick on that. When it is once done, both Harry's father and mother will be pleased with our action, I'm sure."

The proposition met with general approval, and in less than five minutes ample funds for another statue were promised.

"I think that shrine is too far away," remarked Clarence Alvero; "what do you say if we build one near the house, there,"—and he pointed to a beautiful and well-wooded "dip" in the land not a hundred yards from the villa. "That's a beautiful place, and no one would dare to come so close to steal anything."

"But who can act as mason?" asked Dunleigh.

"I for one," "And I," "And I," responded several.

"But say, Alvi," inquired Ames, "where is the building material to come from? That's too solid a matter to be evolved from thy massive brain!"

"There are very many beautiful stones around the lake," remarked Tony Shiller, "suppose we take boats and collect as many varieties as possible."

"Kingly, we appoint you architect," shouted the chairman of the meeting, "and you will at once set about making plans—and specifications."

The young gentleman had a natural taste for drawing and cheerfully accepted the office. In less than an hour he had produced a picture of the proposed shrine. All adjourned to obtain Mrs. Selby's consent to their plan. It was agreed that if that kind lady sanctioned their plans, Harry should be made general overseer, but no mention was to be made to him, under the direst penalties, of the proposed purchase.

Mrs. Selby was gratified that her confidence in her young visitors had been well founded. She received their proposals with pleasure and readily granted their requests, insisting, however, that the boys should work at the building of the new shrine only half a day at a time, wisely judging that for young people unaccustomed to such work, half a day at a time would be sufficient. The work was undertaken with all the ardor of youth. Some went in boats along the shore to look for beautiful stones, others were soon busy in digging out an approach, while others procured a farm wagon, and from a neighboring quarry secured limestone slabs for a foundation.

The land around Silver Lake is of glacial formation, and furnished an abundant variety of stones. The

delight of the boys knew no bounds, when, on breaking large boulders, they saw granites of all hues, almost pure white, light and dark gray, pink, and red of all shades, even to a deep blood color, fine specimens of syenite, iron pyrites, and many green and purple stones. There was a charming variety, and the shrine promised to be not only a pretty piece of architectural work, but also a collection of specimens valuable from a geological standpoint.

Willing hands make light work. The seventh morning after the work had been begun, saw the keystone of the arch placed in position amid the lusty cheers of the young enthusiasts. The next thing was to beautify the approach. This was sodded with the best Kentucky blue grass the neighborhood afforded, and planted with young trees. One improvement suggested another. The dome of the grotto was bedecked with pearly clam shells, and made more beautiful still by being almost hidden by rich wild transplanted grapevines. The workers declared that if they did not leave something really poetic it would not be worthy of the laborers.

At the end of their self-imposed task, there were, it is true, many sore fingers, for lime is apt to burn tender skins. Then there was more than one lame back. But these, the boys considered, were small affairs. Was there not a new and beautiful shrine constructed in honor of the Blessed Virgin, and in reparation for an offense committed against her?

When the finishing touches had been given, the young builders fell to discussing the ways and means of secretly sending for the new statue. While thus engaged, Harry Selby, who was standing a little apart

from the rest, saw a flat-bottomed boat containing but one person slowly approach the shore immediately in front of the place where the boys were clustered. The man moved his boat cautiously as he neared the land. The poets did not take much notice of him, but Harry stood staring at the intruder, and, if looks count for anything, he was not in the most amiable of moods. The man came up the slope deliberately. He was carrying something white in his arms which he seemed afraid of breaking.

"Mornin', gents," he said, as he reached the group. "This image was brought up to the hotel the night afore last by a boy from the big camp. He said he found it floatin' in the lake."

"Found it floating? Nonsense!" was Harry's reply.

"Well, I guess he meant he found it in shallow water, but he told me he found it floatin'. The big camp was broken up the night before last, and the boy brought this image to the hotel an' said he guessed it belonged to the Island. The boy didn't seem to tell a very straight story anyhow."

"What was the boy's name?"

"Dunno, sir. Said he belonged to the big camp. Seemed kind o' shy-like, and tried to hide his face from me. Guess I'd hardly know the boy again if I saw him."

"Shy! the young thief!" burst in Dunleigh. "He knew what he was doing. I wish I had him here," and he looked awful things.

"Here or not," remarked Shiller, "I wouldn't like to be in his shoes. I'll bet some kind of retribution overtakes him before long."

"It may, if his intention were a bad one," put in Winters, "but let us charitably suppose there was not much deliberation, but much ignorance. How old was the kid?"

"'Bout nine or ten, I guess. He was quite small," responded the stranger. The man was evidently a non-Catholic, and did not seem to recognize anything particularly atrocious in the theft, and after all he was only performing a common act of honesty in returning something to its rightful owner. He was, therefore, much surprised when Harry—as soon as his good nature had reasserted itself—thrust a dollar bill into his hand. Several others added something, and the hotel employee was astonished at his sudden good fortune.

As soon as the man had left, Roy Henning, a quiet, credulous boy, asked Harry Selby:

"Do you really believe the statue was found floating on the lake?"

"Not a word of it. In the first place, do you think we could credit such a story coming from such a source? Then, look at the statue. There is not the slightest evidence that water has ever touched it. The blue on the sash is as bright as when it came from Paris."

"But it would make a very pretty story," persisted the other.

"It would, in my opinion, Roy, be ridiculous to start such a story. I know, my dear fellow, that you are always looking out for the marvelous, but such a story as you suggest would certainly do harm to uneducated Catholics, and to those who are opposed to our faith and consequently do not believe in any kind of mir-

acles. We had better let that story drop if we want to retain credit for common sense."

All was again excitement at The Oaks. Many wild conjectures were hazarded as to the identity of the boy, and when and how the theft was committed. Mrs. Selby was convinced that the little fellow, whoever he was, had taken it without malicious intention. "Because," said she, "it would be almost impossible for a small non-Catholic boy to know the statue had been blessed, or to realize what veneration Catholics have for any representation of the Mother of God. And then," she added, "it is always safe to take the more charitable side in a doubtful case."

Shiller was still of the opinion that the thief would meet with condign punishment. Amid all their speculations, one great fact remained. The precious statue had been returned.

"I think the Blessed Mother is very clever," said little Francis, nestling up to his mother.

"What do you mean, my son?" said that lady, not a little surprised at the expression.

"I think she is quite 'cute,'" continued the lad, in childish innocence, "for she must have been tired of being so far away from the house, so she leaves her home under the linden tree. Then as soon as a new place is built for her, why! doesn't she come back?" and the little fellow looked up inquiringly into his mother's face.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW REPARATION WAS MADE.

WHEN Mr. Selby returned to his elegant villa the next Saturday afternoon he heard, with surprise, the story of the theft and restoration of the statue. His knowledge of character told him that in the building of the new shrine his visitors wished to indicate delicately their gratitude for the pleasure of the outing, and yet beneath all he could not but recognize their solid devotion to the Blessed Virgin. What would he have thought had he learned of their proposal to purchase a new statue? He could not fail to see that while the students had acted from a spirit of piety, his grounds had been much improved at their hands. He therefore determined to reward them by giving them some sort of a surprise, but was for a time much puzzled what it should be. A dance in the large dining-room would probably embarrass them, for, after all, they were but school-boys. He thought of a picnic, but they were having one, practically, every day.

He was fully aware that to give healthy boys pleasure they must be actively employed. After much thinking and several consultations with his wife he thought the best thing he could do would be to have a grand illumination of their own handiwork, and invite Father Dormer, the parish priest, to come over to bless the new shrine, and to bless again the statue. After the religious ceremony was over he would have a display of fireworks on another part of the island.

Father Dormer was one of those rare men who are equally at home in a drawing-room or a log house.

Although his hair was thickly sprinkled with gray he had lost none of the fire and enthusiasm of youth. His great delight was to have a number of young men around him. With pious sodalities and other associations he kept his people constantly busy, so that few left it to encounter the seductions and dangers of city life. When Mr. Selby told him what he wished to do, the good Father was all enthusiasm.

"Capital idea, sir, capital. Your young visitors are students of St. Cuthbert's?"

"Yes, Father."

"Then surely all are members of the Immaculate Conception sodality, eh?"

Mr. Selby felt quite sure they were.

"And members of their college altar society too, eh?"

The host could not answer for that.

"No matter, no matter. The other is sufficient. Now, Mr. Selby, I'll tell you what I'll do. We must make this affair a great success. To-morrow evening I will bring over a dozen surplices and cassocks, and two purple cassocks for Willie and Francis. We'll have a grand procession of reparation to the shrine. You look to the illuminations, and I'll attend to the strictly ecclesiastical part of it. It'll be grand."

There was no lack of Chinese lanterns of all colors and sizes at The Oaks. The many illuminated fêtes held there had acquired for the place the name of the Enchanted Island. A hundred small oil lamps were secured, and on the following day the boys were left to their own ingenuity to make the illumination a success. By eight o'clock everything was finished and lit up. The shrine was ablaze with colored lights.

The Catholic students entered fully into the spirit of the occasion. Weirdly beautiful appeared the procession as it wound its way slowly along the crest of the hill above the shrine. Never, perhaps, had the woods of Wisconsin re-echoed with more remarkable music, as the soft cadences of the intoned litany rolled gently over the still waters of the lake, or were lost among the giant oaks, which many lustrals ago had probably witnessed the Indian spirit-dance.

When the beautiful shrine was reached, the singers separated, and stood in two rows behind the newly-planted trees in front of the shrine. Father Dormer passed up between them and reverently placed the precious burden in the brilliantly lighted niche. He then blessed the shrine according to the Church's ritual. When this was finished the students began the triumphal song of Our Lady:

"Magnificat anima mea Dominum,
Et exultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo."

This strain of praise being ended, the act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin was recited, and then the simple but touching ceremony was brought to a close by singing the *Te Deum*.

During this devotional exercise the shrine, thanks to the boys' efforts, was a mass of light, the flames of the little oil lamps in the motionless night air having the appearance of small incandescent lights.

A ring of lamps inside the dome of the niche was so suspended that it served the double purpose of illuminating the beautiful stones, and of forming a nimbus of glory around the head of the statue. Hundreds of

lanterns were swung in the trees, and above all shone a large star of fire formed of small oil lamps. The effect of the whole was marvelously beautiful, and will long be remembered both by the enthusiastic visitors and the family whose grounds were thus illuminated.

After this solemn function was over, all gave themselves up to the enjoyment of what was to follow. Refreshments were served on the lawn, and the boys sang all the college songs they knew. The good priest told many a funny story, and many a useful one too, for the enjoyment of his young friends. The last pin-wheel had gone off in a blaze of glory, leaving the Enchanted Island to the light of the moon. All seemed sated with happiness, and just then there was a lull in the conversation. The company were suddenly thrilled by Father Dormer remarking:

"By the way, did you hear of the accident that happened at the depot last night? No? Well, then, I must tell you the story from the beginning. It seems that quite recently the hotel keeper over in the bay discovered that a man, one of the guests at his hotel, was the culprit who had stolen the statue. This fellow—a pretty mean sort of a man, from all I can hear—had taken it to his room, but then became afraid to keep it there, fearing that some of the Catholic servant-girls would tell the drivers of the hotel 'buses, and that they would thrash the fellow, which really is most likely, for you know most of them are Catholics. So he hid the statue in the barn, and paid one of the boys from the big camp to take it to the hotel clerk, who in turn sent a man over here with it.

"Well, about the accident," he continued, seeing how excited the group of boys around him had be-

come, "this fellow was told by the hotel keeper, as soon as he had learned the facts of the case, that he could no longer stay in his hotel, and late last night he was driven to the station. Just as he arrived there the horses became frightened at something, turned suddenly and threw the driver and the expelled hotel guest to the ground. The driver was not much hurt, but the latter's leg was fractured just below the knee, and although the bystanders offered to take him back to the hotel he would not hear of it, but insisted upon being put on the train and taken to Chicago. Sad, wasn't it?"

Shiller, greatly excited, began to nudge the boy standing nearest to him. Seeing no one was inclined to ask any questions on the subject, he asked:

"Do you believe, Father, that that was retribution?"

"We can not judge, my son. It is safer to leave those questions to One above. This I know, that traditional history gives numerous examples which go to show that our good Lord will often appear to overlook crimes against Himself, while He punishes those who wilfully dishonor His holy Mother."

No one seemed inclined to discuss the matter further and silence fell upon the gathering, and soon the merry party broke up. Altogether the boys had had a glorious day of anticipations, realizations, and surprises, and it was near midnight before they retired to rest, tired, smoky, and happy, to dream the sweet dreams of youth

CHAPTER XV.

A NEW BOY.

THE coming of a new scholar during the school term is an important event to students. All are curious to know his name, age, and various accomplishments. The interest is at the highest when the newcomer first takes in hand a baseball. To the boys his proficiency in study is of very secondary importance. But can he pitch? Is he a catcher? Where can he be put on the diamond? These are the momentous questions, more important and absorbing, to the boys, than are the fluctuations of the grain market to the speculator, or an approaching campaign to the politician.

John Osborne, the "new boy," arrived at St. Cuthbert's during the second week of November of the year following the vacation at Silver Lake. His father was dead, and his mother admitted that now he was seventeen he required a stronger hand than hers to mold his character; in fact he was too big to be managed at home. Osborne had many manly, and some "mannish" notions. The best characteristic in his somewhat paradoxical nature was a devoted, almost passionate, love for his mother. Like a true boy, he simply despised any boy who spoke slightly of his parents.

This was the first time he had left home, and, although he would have indignantly denied that he was homesick, it would not have taken much to make him admit that he was just a little what the boys call "blue"—but why so beautiful a color should be chosen to indicate depression of spirits is one of the mysteries

of boydom. He was decidedly "blue," and who could blame him? Boys at college are not the only people in the world who are "blue" at times.

His mother's parting words were still ringing in his ears:

"I commend you to God and to His holy Mother. Be true to yourself."

He remembered, too, that it was his own fault that had caused the separation. Then coming to a strange place and among strange faces did not tend to raise his spirits. People had said he wanted a strong hand to manage him. He was made of good material, and his heart was in the right place. Somehow it got twisted around once in a while, but, in the main, it was all right.

"Howard, here is a new boy. Please take charge of him to-day and show him around. You will be free of studies to-night," said Mr. Hillson, the first prefect.

The two boys glanced at each other. John Osborne was rather tall, muscular and strong. His hair was slightly wavy and of a rich brown. His features were regular, his eyes were very large and of a deep blue, shaded by long, dark lashes.

Hunter held out his hand, but it was not accepted at once. John hesitated, and was not going to commit himself, he thought, to any line of policy. At present he was suspicious of the college, the boys, the faculty—everything.

Howard still held out his hand. There was candor and good humor in his face. Osborne scanned it carefully. He was cautiously forming an estimate of his new acquaintance.

"Shall we be friends?" asked Hunter.

"That depends," said the other boy.

"Upon what?"

"Many things."

"One, for instance?"

"Suppose you're a goody-goody, a softy. I hate such fellows."

"Do I look like one?"

"N-no. But I don't know you."

"That can be cured in time."

Howard's good nature finally prevailed, and they shook hands. Boys do not shake hands for nothing, at least, real boys do not. It is a tacit compact of good fellowship, and so these two became friends at once. Hunter soon learned what sort of a boy he had to deal with, and determined to win his friendship.

"Do you have jug here?" asked Osborne.

"No; cups and saucers."

"Pshaw! Jug—being kept in after class?"

"Worse than that."

"What?"

"Cards."

"Playing cards?"

"No; conduct cards."

"Explain."

Howard Hunter then explained that if a boy did not possess one of those valuable pieces of pasteboard every month, the unlucky fellow could not go to the ball-field, or for a swim in the natatorium, or anywhere out of the schoolyard.

"Phew! but that's tough," remarked Osborne.

"But not so tough as the thought that you deserve it all," remarked Hunter simply.

Osborne looked up quickly to see if his new ac-

quaintance was quizzing him, but appeared satisfied. The two boys had a long talk. Osborne put many questions about the students, their occupations and sports, and their dispositions. They were now nearing the yard, after having explored the whole of the grounds. It was near supper time.

"Osborne," said his companion.

"What is it?"

"Will you let me say one thing?"

"At a time, yes."

"But will you listen?"

"If it's worth listening to, certainly."

"But will you act on what I say to you?"

"That very much depends on what you have to say. Look here, now, Hunter, I'm not going to do the disciple act at the feet of any—any—whom do you call him?—that I know nothing about."

"Gamaliel;" suggested Howard.

"Yes; that's the fellow, I believe. But, anyhow, 'give way, give way all!' Hope it isn't very heavy shot."

"On the contrary; you may think it all smoke. But seriously, there are some boys who are always in trouble. You'll soon learn who they are. They are not bad fellows at heart, but they either don't care, or won't think of consequences. Now, if any one of these fellows tries to draw you on into some scrape I want you to look him straight in the eye—square in the eye, mind—and if he stands that without flinching—well, then, trust him."

Osborne began to laugh, but he looked up suddenly, and saw that his newly found friend was quite in earnest. A curious feeling came over him, and in his

heart of hearts he began already greatly to respect Howard, the secret of whose influence he did not learn till long after.

"Great land o' goats! Hunter, don't be so awfully serious about it. You make me feel as if I am already being lectured by one of those professors or prefects for my first scrape, instead of being warned by a jolly good fellow."

Hunter smiled at his own earnestness, yet he was anxious to get his friend to promise, for he saw he would keep it if he made it.

"It isn't such heavy shot, after all, is it?"

"No; but why you want me to make such a promise is one of those things that is past finding out. Do you already put me down as one of the black sheep?"

"Not by a jug—I mean by no manner of means. It's only a precaution—this warning, which may come in very useful some time."

"But if I gave anybody a promise, and then broke it, I'd feel like a mean cur—even if the promise had been to lick somebody." The latter part of the sentence was spoken parenthetically.

"But this isn't an oath. It's a promise only."

"Which if I make I shall keep," said Osborne, proudly.

"Just what I think, and that's why I want you to make it."

John Osborne was silent for some minutes. Hunter did not disturb him.

"All right. I promise."

"Shake."

They both shook hands again cordially, and the understanding between them seemed complete.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW OSBORNE MAKES A RECORD.

THE new boy soon became accustomed to the routine of college life, and in less than a week he wrote to his mother a glowing account of his new friend, Howard Hunter. The Thursday after Osborne's arrival there was to be the last game of baseball of the season, which had been unusually long and warm. Osborne played a good game, and was conscious of it, yet he did not care to go on exhibition on the last day of the season. He did not, therefore, go to the ball-field that afternoon, but, with two or three other boys, went for a long walk across the country. Before starting, he was informed that he had to be back by four o'clock. To his surprise, he saw that the boys with whom he was walking seemed determined to disregard this injunction, or, rather, to ignore it. To start back alone would be to lose his way. He was vexed, because he did not want thus early to get into the bad graces of his superiors. Not being familiar with the surrounding country, he had to keep with the band with which he had started out. He arrived home three-quarters of an hour late, and was, of course, met by the prefect on his arrival.

"This is a bad beginning, Osborne. Not here a week and you have violated one of the most positive rules. Do not go out of the yard again until I give you permission."

This was Osborne's first transgression, and it vexed him considerably, because he felt that he was not altogether to blame. However, he kept silence about

the matter, and the prefect did not learn for a long time after that he was not really at fault.

That evening Osborne told Hunter what had happened. Howard looked grave, and assured him that if he wanted to be happy at college he must keep on the good side of the prefects, and the only way to do this was to observe the college rules. He added, just as the bell rang for studies :

"Look here, John, if you want to keep straight, you know to whom you must go for help," and pointing to a statue in a niche in one of the college buildings, he added : "She will help you."

Howard's words impressed John Osborne deeply, and at night-prayers in the chapel that evening he promised himself, if possible, to get back the prefect's good opinion.

The next recreation day on which he was free to go out of bounds he determined to be at home before the appointed time. This time he went to the ball-field and critically watched a scrub game of football.

"Umph! those fellows can't play football a little bit yet," he said to himself, and sauntered away and strolled into a thick wood which bordered on the large meadow. He had not walked about more than five minutes when he came upon three boys who were sitting around a large stone slab.

"Come, newcomer," said one, "you're just the fellow we want. You'll make the fourth at a game of euchre," and the boys reproduced the cards which they had hurriedly put away at his approach.

"But, boys, card-playing is forbidden, isn't it?"

He was surprised at the daring of these boys, who were playing within a stone's throw of the prefect, who

was at that moment standing at the very edge of the wood, so that his beretta could be seen over the tops of the low bushes.

"Oh! don't ask him. He's one of the chaplain's pious pets," sneered one, in an undertone, but not so low but that it could be heard, as the speaker intended.

Osborne was very much nettled, and felt strongly like thrashing the fellow, but then he saw he would have to fight three.

"'Tisn't as bad as being out an hour late, anyway," said another, who had evidently heard of Osborne's first trouble.

"Don't ask him," said the third. "He's too good. He's afraid."

What boy will allow another to call him a coward?

"Who's afraid?" said Osborne hastily.

"Why, you are, of course," replied the tempter.

"Am I? Just give me those cards." He took them angrily and in a moment was shuffling and dealing them, unobservant of the telegraphic glances that passed between the three. He did not, however, intend to remain and play, for he rather despised these boys. He told himself that when he had dealt a hand he would get up and leave, but it so happened that he gave himself a fine hand, and—played it. Another deal, and, by good luck, another fine hand. The game became interesting, and, in spite of his intention, he played on.

Osborne had been absorbed in the game perhaps half an hour when a shadow fell across his hands, and he looked up. There stood Mr. Hillson, this time looking very angry.

For the next few days Osborne and the other three were busy committing lines to memory. His reputa-

tion was now badly impaired, and he seemed to grow more and more careless about it. Times were hard for him, for he had more penances than play. He did not mean to do badly, but he saw, or fancied he saw, that those around him did not understand him. Hunter was surprised at the change in him, but said nothing. He foresaw that the time would come when he could help his new friend. In the meantime they did not see much of each other.

CHAPTER XVII.

SOME CHRISTMAS HAPPENINGS.

At length Christmas day arrived. The boys had been awakened earlier than usual by the college choir observing the time-honored custom of old St. Cuthbert's of visiting the various dormitories and singing Christmas carols. An early communion Mass was said at 7 o'clock, and the solemn High Mass was sung immediately after breakfast. After this Mass was over it seemed an interminable time to the boys till 10 o'clock. That was the hour when the box room was to be opened, and then each one would know what had been sent him from home—boxes filled with all sorts of good things; such as only mothers and sisters know how to send to the absent ones.

Osborne's box came with the others, but precisely because his heart was in the right place, precisely because he saw all the significance of the gift from

home, he felt, just the least bit, as if he did not deserve it. This feeling, however, soon wore off as he dived into it and brought forth one token after another of his mother's love and affection. To his surprise he found his box contained, among many other good things, a bottle of wine.

For a moment he thought that perhaps it was intended for some one else, but he soon put that unwelcome thought out of his mind. That afternoon he invited two or three boys out into the woods and took the bottle with him. The day was cold, and the wine was enjoyed immensely, and as long as the boys kept out in the bracing atmosphere it seemed to have no effect on them. It was different as soon as they came home and went into the warm gymnasium.

Naturally of a sunny, jovial disposition, it took very little, under the circumstances, to make Osborne abnormally good-humored. The sense of freedom from studies, the prevailing holiday feeling among the boys, together with the wine he had drunk that afternoon, made him boisterously merry.

Several of the older boys exchanged glances, and guessed what was the matter, and regretfully predicted trouble for the "new boy," as he was still called. In the midst of the noisy fun Mr. Hillson walked in. He at once saw the boy's flushed face and excited manner, and surmised the worst.

"Osborne, you had better go to the infirmary. Go at once."

The prefect's voice was stern, but he spoke in a low tone so as not to attract attention.

The astonished boy left the room immediately, and in going across the yard met the ubiquitous prefect.

"My boy," he said, and this time there was a ring of genuine sympathy in his voice, "I am very sorry this has happened, and at the beginning of the holidays, too. I had hoped that you would have kept out of mischief this week. You are not true to yourself. I am very, very sorry for you."

Osborne was deeply touched. "You are not true to yourself" kept ringing in his ears. They were nearly his mother's parting words, too, but what a commentary on hers! He had not been in the infirmary an hour when Hunter came over to see him.

"I suppose you are ashamed of me now, Howard?"

"Not much, old fellow! But, say, you're in a bad scrape this time, and I'm afraid they will send you home."

"Send—me—home!" repeated Osborne aghast. Visions of his mother's grief, if such a thing should happen, flashed before his mind.

"Good gracious! they won't do *that*, will they?"

"I'm very much afraid they will. You know they are death on drinking at St. Cuthbert's. Where did you get the confounded stuff, anyway?"

"In my Christmas box."

"You *did*?"

"Sure. Why?"

Howard did not reply, but thought for a moment.

"Oh! I had almost forgotten something," he said, suddenly. "Here's a letter for you—came at supper time—from your mother, I suppose."

The letter from his mother just at that moment caused the boy a severe pang of remorse. What would she say if she saw him now! But perhaps she said something about the wine. He scanned the letter

hurriedly, and saw near the end these words: "The wine in your box is for the sick Brother whom you told me about in your last letter. It is of a very choice vintage, and I sincerely trust that it will do him good."

"Hurrah! splendid!" shouted Osborne, and he began to dance about the room.

"What is splendid?" asked the astonished Hunter. "If you have not completely lost your head, perhaps you will explain. For the life of me, in the present case, I can not see any cause for rejoicing, much less dancing."

By way of reply Osborne was tempted to turn a handspring, but checked himself when he saw Hunter's anxious face. He then told his friend that he could prove that he was not down town to a saloon. He showed him the letter.

All effects of what he had taken that afternoon had now completely vanished. He looked as bright and fresh as in early morning, and, besides, the contents of a by no means large bottle had been generously shared between four.

"See here, John," said Hunter, with animation, "you just take a good cold splash and brush up, and I'll be back in a minute or two."

"What are you up to now?"

"No matter. Do as I say," and he was gone. Osborne had just finished his toilet when his friend came back, accompanied by the prefect and the President of the college. Both officials looked at the boy in surprise.

"It is as I said, sir," said Hunter.

"I am glad to find it is," said the head of St. Cuthbert's, not unkindly.

The two men went to the window and engaged in an earnest conversation in an undertone, in which the prefect appeared to be pleading. The culprit stood in the middle of the room, perfectly at a loss what to do. Howard stood in a corner, and his friend could see his lips trembling. Presently the President turned to Osborne and said, in a severe, yet fatherly way:

"I regret the trouble you have been causing, and when I heard what occurred this afternoon I determined to send you home. Hunter assures me you have not been down town, and now if you can prove that what you drank came in your Christmas box, it will lighten matters very much."

With a grateful look at Hunter, who, at that moment, could not stand still for excitement, Osborne produced his mother's letter, and silently handed it to the President. At the same moment he saw Howard's lips moving rapidly. He did not know till long after that at that critical moment Howard was saying the "Hail Mary" as fast as he could for the successful termination of the interview.

"Very well," said the President, when he had read the letter; "this is satisfactory. I see how the mistake has occurred; you may join the other boys. I now leave the matter with Mr. Hillson."

The President then left the room, glad the affair had terminated so pleasantly, for he was a warm-hearted man, and loved boys. As he reached the infirmary steps the three at the window heard him call a big, handsome shepherd dog: "Come, Rover, come, Rover," and as they looked through the window they saw the magnificent animal leaping and yelping around him with pleasure at being noticed. Hunter, radiant with

smiles, caught Osborne's hand and squeezed it as he left the room. He had that tact which enabled him to see at once that it would be better for him to retire now. Mr. Hillson had also reached the door when Osborne said timidly, almost shyly:

"May I say a word, sir?"

"You may, John, as many as you like. What is it?"

"I prom—promise you, sir, this shall be the last trouble I'll get into, if you will trust me in the future. I *do* value your good opinion, sir." The latter sentence was decidedly husky. The kindly tone of the prefect in the yard just before had aroused all the boy's better nature.

"I have always had faith in you," said Mr. Hillson, although his own voice was suspiciously unsteady, "although sometimes it was too much tried. For the future I shall trust you fully—*fully*. Be true to yourself, John, and pray for help. Join the other boys now, for I am extremely busy, for you know the first Christmas play begins in half an hour. Remember, I have every confidence in you."

And Osborne determined to deserve it for the future.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MEAN REVENGE.

FROM the time the good understanding was established between himself and the prefect, John Osborne realized that it was quite possible to have "a good time" without getting into trouble. Occasion-

ally, of course, he "kicked over the traces," as he himself expressed it, but a look or a word from Mr. Hillson put everything straight again. Every allowance was made for the exuberance of animal spirits.

He did not find it hard to "break" with the more undesirable class of boys, and the less he saw of them the more he was in the company of Hunter, Stapleton, Selby, and such boys.

Winter wore rapidly away, and one very warm day in spring his good resolutions were put strongly to the test. It came about this way.

In the far corner of the yard sat a knot of boys discussing with earnestness a plan of some kind. It was evidently something unusual, for most of the talking was done when the prefect's back was turned to them as he walked up and down the yard. Osborne was playing catch with Hunter, and as he ran near the group he heard the last part of a sentence—"so good that wings are already sprouting."

He did not distinguish the speaker, but Rob Jones said to him:

"Say, Osborne, we are going to run down to the river when the bell rings, and take the first dip of the season. Won't you come along?"

The temptation was great, for Osborne, like all healthy boys, was passionately fond of swimming.

"Contra legem, fellows," said Osborne.

"Pshaw, what's the difference?"

Osborne hesitated; Jones thought he was weakening.

"So, Jones," he said in an offhand sort of a way, "you want me to go for a swim?"

"Yes, it's plenty warm enough, and no one will ever find it out. Won't you come?"

"Yes. I'll come if—"

"That's a good fellow. I thought you wouldn't back out of a bit of fun."

"—if," continued the brave boy, "if you'll look me straight in the eye and repeat the words, 'it's all right.'" There was a pause.

"If you really think it is honest and right, and tell me so, I'll go."

He planted his feet wide apart, and, with his hands deep down in his pockets, awaited the reply.

None came, and Jones slunk away with his eyes on the ground. John Osborne realized that this was a final break between himself and Jones, so he determined to give him a parting shot. He followed him and said:

"Look here, Rob Jones, it was you who got me into that first card scrape, and many others since. Now, see here, I'm tired of that kind of thing. You may think I've got the swelled head, but I mean to act the man, so if you have any more dirty work to do you must do it alone."

"Good for you," remarked Hunter, who had come up and heard this very incoherent but well-meant speech of his friend.

Jones walked away quite crestfallen, but with clenched fists, which, however, he took care not to show, as he knew that either of the speakers could thrash him easily.

According to all tradition from time immemorial, the villain of these pages ought to be ugly in features and have a low forehead and a hang-dog look. But it so happened that none of these regulation qualities were possessed by Jones, who was a remarkably hand-

some boy, with a clear skin and regular features. He was an intelligent boy, and his perversity came from an indiscriminate course of reading. He read omnivorously of all the vile and trashy so-called literature of the day. This was the secret of his perverted tastes.

He clearly saw that Osborne would never have broken away from him if it had not been for the influence of Hunter and his friends. He, therefore, resolved to "get even," as he termed it, or be revenged on Hunter, and incidentally on Osborne.

Notwithstanding his rebuff, Jones did not mean to forego his intended swim, and as soon as the bell rang which indicated the time the boys might go out walking on recreation days, he and Buckley and Jim Finch started for the river.

Buckley was a thoroughly bad boy, but as we shall not have much to do with him a detailed description of him will be unnecessary. Jim Finch was not so bad a character as either of the other two, but unfortunately he had come under the influence of Jones, and was going from bad to worse. Thus by degrees of comparison we can sum up the trio: Finch, bad; Jones, worse; Buckley, worst.

By the time they had reached the river, a mile and a half from college, Jones had settled on his plan of revenge. Physical force, he knew, was out of the question. But there were other ways. He remembered how the unfortunate Deming had been publicly expelled for thieving, and he remembered also that the same Deming had sent a box of caramels to Hunter while he lay sick in the infirmary. Here was a chance, he thought, to get even with Hunter. By hints and

innuendoes he would start a report that the candies were stolen, and that Hunter knew it when he accepted them.

He knew how sensitive Hunter was, and this would touch him keenly. A word dropped here and there would spread and grow like fire in prairie grass, and almost shape its own story. He had no sooner formulated his plan than he began to put it in operation. He began cautiously.

"I wonder who split on Deming, and gave him away?"

"Some of the pious crew, I suppose," said Buckley.

"Of course."

"But why of course?"

"Oh! they're too good altogether. Just the fellows to go sneaking up to the prefect about everything. They might have got him sent off privately. I could go sneaking up, too, but I ain't built that way. I know a thing or two about some of those fellows."

Instantly the other two boys were eager for disclosures, but Jones had done enough for the present. He had started the ball rolling. That was enough for one day. He refused to say any more.

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW HOWARD HUNTER ACTED UNEXPECTEDLY.

THE curiosity of Finch and Buckley made them determined to get Jones' secret from him. The next morning both of them plied him with questions as to what he knew of the Deming affair.

"Oh! nothing much," he replied, still purposely putting them off, "only it's my opinion that there is one in the mud just as deeply as Deming ever was in the mire." He wished a story that some one was implicated with Deming in his robberies to spread. An intangible rumor to that effect was soon current in the yard. He was surprised to see how easily a rumor could be made to circulate. Then he decided to go a step farther, using the other two boys as his tools, he himself keeping in the background.

"It is strange that such a rumor should have got abroad," he said to Buckley and Finch some days later, "and I can't imagine how it got started, or what there is in it. Everybody seems to say that some of the stolen property found in Deming's trunk was received by some other boy. Now who was the boy and what was the property received, I should like to know? I have thought the matter over, and I can remember nothing that any one received from Deming except that box of candies that was given to Hunter when he was sick. It is certainly very strange that a boy should receive a whole box, isn't it? Of course I'm not accusing Hunter, but the affair looks just a little bit shady, doesn't it, now?"

"Pshaw! you! that won't go down," said Finch, suddenly. "Do you expect me to believe that *Hunter* stole those candies?"

"I didn't say he stole them, did I?"

"But you said as much. You hint that he took them knowing them to be stolen."

Finch was enlightened, and thoroughly disgusted. In a flash he saw Jones' game. He was startled by such meanness. He knew that to be accessory to such

a report would be as mean as to originate it. He made up his mind instantly as to his course of action.

"Stop, Jones," he said, menacingly, "this has gone too far. I'll have none of it."

"None of what?"

"Of blasting another's character, I tell you. Hunter has done me no harm. I now see your little game, and a *mighty* small one it is, too. You may count me out."

Finch pulled his hat down over his eyes in a determined way, and walked away. Jones was not much put out, apparently, by the desertion. Buckley was left and he could use him, and he knew that the seed he had already so stealthily planted would soon bear fruit. He was careful to tell Buckley that what he had just said was only an opinion, but one well founded, he thought.

"For," said he, argumentatively, "what boy ever took a whole box of caramels from another? And who ever saw any of those caramels afterward? Any one can see the reason for *that*, it seems to me."

A few days after these events Frank Stapleton, Harry Selby, and Howard Hunter were walking up and down the yard together.

"Did you hear the strange news that's going the rounds?" asked Stapleton.

"No, what is it?" replied Hunter.

"How such an absurd story got about, or what it actually means I can not well make out. Something to the effect that one of the other students knew of the stealing by that wretched Deming, and was receiver for some of those stolen goods."

"Oh! I say! that's too thin. That won't go down. Who started such a fairy tale?" laughed Hunter.

"There's the mystery," replied Selby; "that seems to be just one of those things past finding out."

"But," persisted Hunter, "who would believe such a story as that, of any one now in the college?"

Stapleton tried to change the conversation. He was heart-sick, for he had been shocked beyond measure that afternoon to hear Howard Hunter's name mentioned as the one implicated in the scandal.

"It's a lie," shouted Stapleton, when he first heard it. "It's a—a—a downright lie, and I can lick the first man who says it isn't. You fools, you! You sit there like a lot of fishwomen gabbling away one another's reputations. It's a lie, and let any one of you fellows dare say it isn't!"

Whatever the boys thought, no one was foolhardy enough just then to maintain an opposite opinion. Stapleton was seldom so demonstrative, and yet for all that, he knew full well that sooner or later the detestable slander must reach the ears of its victim. He debated with himself whether it would not be a kindness to tell Hunter himself, rather than let him hear the story from ruder and less kindly lips. He decided to tell him, but when the time and opportunity came, his courage failed him, and Howard Hunter received the shock in a much more abrupt way than any of his friends had anticipated. It happened in this way:

That Tuesday afternoon the college treasurer had dispensed the usual amount of pocket-money. By some means Jones had received ten cents over the regular allowance, and he was chuckling over the evident mistake of the treasurer.

"Hello! Hunter, here's a case for you," said Jones, as he and a following of four or five, who regarded

him as a hero, came up to Howard. "Suppose the treasurer gives a fellow ten cents more than his pocket-money, can he keep it?"

"The treasurer knows his business, doesn't he?"

"But I mean, suppose it's a mistake. Is it a sin to keep it then?"

Hunter's eyes flashed fire.

"Is the ten cents yours?" he demanded energetically.

"No—but—"

"But what? So you would gauge your actions by their sinfulness! I should never want that case settled. A Catholic boy at a Catholic college! Have you ever heard such words as 'honor,' 'truth,' 'trustworthiness,' 'generosity'? Pshaw! I'm ashamed of you!"

Hunter put his arm in Osborne's and was walking away, when he overheard Jones mutter something, and caught the words, "preaching"—"stolen goods"—"hypocrite."

He turned back, and suddenly stood face to face with Jones.

"What's that? What's that you say?"

Jones realized that trouble was brewing, but he determined to brazen it out.

"I said," he answered defiantly, "that preaching doesn't look well from *you* since the talk got around."

"What talk? What do you mean? Speak out, man."

"What do I mean? Do you pretend that you haven't heard what's in everybody's mouth just now?" sneered Jones.

A thousand confused thoughts flashed through Hunter's brain.

"I do mean to say so, and you had better make yourself clear. What is in everybody's mouth? What do you mean?"

"That you received that box of caramels from Deming when you knew they were stolen. *That's* the talk."

"I—I—I—it's a *lie*—and you know it. I—I took stolen goods!"

Hunter staggered for a moment. He was stunned. He was at the moment clearly beside himself, and his face expressed the horror he felt, but he noticed the malicious satisfaction on Jones' face at his discomfiture. The two boys stood facing each other like two young lions at bay.

In an instant Hunter saw the wrong that had been done him and his good name, and he gulped down a big lump of anger that seemed to rise in his throat. He was indignant at the slander and in a moment his pulse rose rapidly and he became violently angry.

"Take that, you cowardly cur!"

What Jones did take—and most unexpectedly—he will probably remember the longest day he lives. Hunter in an uncontrollable fit of anger had struck right out from the shoulder, planting a sound blow between the eyes of his maligner. His sudden passion had given him unusual strength, and Jones did not expect the punishment he received. He was knocked down. Hunter had a strong temptation to kick him soundly as he lay there, but his sense of honor prevented him from giving way to the inclination. In a moment after his anger was over, and he walked away feeling very much ashamed of himself.

The reader must not be too much surprised at Hun-

ter. Remember he was a thoroughly manly and good boy, but he was not a saint. Put yourself in his place. It is safe to venture to say that ninety-nine boys out of one hundred would have acted in the same way under the same circumstances. For all that, it was wrong, and no excuse can be offered for his conduct. He ought to have acted differently—but he did not. In that he showed himself a real boy of flesh and blood, and not one of those boys taken out of the pages of a book. But let us not judge him too severely. What he did in this particular trial was not like Howard Hunter. What he did afterward *was* like him.

CHAPTER XX.

HOWARD HUNTER NEEDS A FRIEND.

HOWARD HUNTER was high-strung, and consequently almost abnormally sensitive. The sudden revelation that he was a suspected boy caused him more pain than any actual physical suffering could have done. Now he remembered all sorts of hints and remarks which had no significance for him previously. The public mind was poisoned against him, and he winced under coming humiliations, and like many another he suffered by anticipation. He had not sought popularity, but having enjoyed it, he was pained to lose it. He even imagined the prefects were now cold and distant toward him.

During these times Jones and Buckley were con-

stantly together. Their nefarious scheme had succeeded beyond their expectations, and they were proportionately elated. Jones, throwing off all caution, assumed somewhat an air of triumph.

All this time Howard Hunter was acting wrongly. Instead of freely associating with the boys as usual, he kept aloof from them. He could not bring himself to mix freely with those whom he imagined suspected him—and not a few did really suspect him! He moped, and his face became paler than usual, while deep rings around his heavy eyes told how much he was suffering.

Osborne and Selby were much concerned for their friend. A week after the fight, or knock-down blow, they determined to take him for a long walk. "Come, old fellow, this won't do," said Selby cheerfully. "You must come out for a good long tramp. You are moping and giving the fellows a chance to say all sorts of things. Depend upon it, the tide of popular feeling will change before long, and then let those who are at the bottom of this look out!"

During the walk Howard was in better spirits than he had been for a week, but he was not yet his former self.

"I think I had better go home," said Howard, as the three friends stood on an old bridge which spanned a rather wide ravine. "I can not fight against such odds."

"You certainly will go—to your long home, via a broken neck, if you lean so hard on that broken railing," remarked Osborne; "don't you see you can almost push it down with your hand?"

"If you go home now, Howard," said Selby, ear-

nestly, "you will make the worst mistake of your life. Already I can see the tide is about to turn in your favor. Wait at least a day or two, and see what happens."

"But the whole thing is so unjust. The rumor is so intangible. You can not bring anything home to anybody."

"That's what you say now. But wait. I heard a few words to-day which I think will lead to something important. Have courage, old man. You know that all your friends are praying for you."

There was a gleam of comfort in this and Howard began to feel more hopeful.

And Rob Jones? Was he happy in the success of his vile scheme? Far from it. He trembled at the magnitude of his success, and like all cowards who hit in the dark, he trembled still more at the thought of the rebound which he knew must come sooner or later. In all this business he had been essentially a coward, and so he determined not to face the just indignation of the boys when they should discover the truth. Buckley decided to act in the same way when the time should come.

On the very day that Hunter was being cheered by his friends, these two worthies were talking together in the ball-field when Finch sauntered up to them.

"Look here, Jones, you have gone far enough," he said, and Jones saw there was "business" in the other's look and in the tone of his voice.

"What business is that of yours?"

"I'll *make* it my business, and you've got to stop it. Do you hear?"

"I'd like to see *you* make me."

"Well, I *will* make you."

"How will you?"

"No matter how. I've got proof enough that you are lying. Now I give you your choice. Undo this wrong you have done to Hunter, or let it go on and take the consequences. I give you until to-morrow morning. Then look out for squalls."

Jones knew that his game was up—that he had gone the length of his rope, and that Finch would do what he promised. His triumph had been a short one—but the revenge had been sweet. He arranged with Buckley that they should make a bolt for home that night. It was decided that Jones should slip away at the beginning of the last recess, which was a quarter of an hour before night-prayers, and wait at the old bridge for his companion. In order not to excite suspicion Buckley was to wait until the bell rang for prayers, a quarter of an hour later.

Just as they had finished these arrangements, Hunter, Osborne, and Selby chanced to come into the ball-field. Hunter went up to Jones and said:

"I came to apologize for striking you the other day. I was too angry," and he held out his hand as a token of reconciliation. Such generosity was above Jones, at least in his present frame of mind. He scowled darkly and walked away without speaking.

That evening Howard Hunter went to the prefect's room to have a talk over his troubles. While he regretted the imaginary loss of Mr. Hillson's esteem, he put the whole case frankly before him and asked him what was the best thing to do.

"In the first place," said the kindly prefect, "it would be unjust and very uncharitable in me if I

thought anything less of you after that knock-down blow you gave Jones than before. You performed your penance, did you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then that's all settled, and I shall never mention it again. Now you want to know whether you should make restitution. In the first place did you know the box of caramels was stolen?"

"No, sir."

"Did you think they were stolen?"

"No, I did not. Such a thought never entered my mind."

"Had you any suspicion they were?"

"None whatever then, but I'm not so sure now."

"That's not the question. You had no suspicion the giver was the thief which he afterward proved to be. Because he turned out to be a thief, that does not prove he stole the candies."

"But, sir, suppose he did?"

"You have no reason to suppose it. A receiver of stolen goods properly must make restitution, but you have no means of knowing they were stolen, and therefore you can not be held responsible. And besides there can be no question of serious injury being done—I say serious—to the one who was deprived of the goods, supposing they were stolen. You are not responsible, even on the worst supposition. This settles the case, Howard, but to make assurance doubly sure, consult your confessor. By the way, what became of those caramels?"

Howard did not reply, but blushed, and dropped his eyes to the floor.

"Well?" said the prefect after waiting some time.

"I sent them to the small boys' yard as a prize in their hand-ball tournament," replied Howard, blushing again at being found out in a good action.

"Good. Is that all, Howard?"

"But the humiliation of being suspected, sir," and the poor boy writhed under the thought of it.

Mr. Hillson did not reply for a moment.

"Thou hast a devil," he said presently, slowly, as if thinking aloud.

Howard was startled, and stared at him in the profoundest astonishment.

"Thou hast a devil," he again repeated slowly. "My dear boy, if our divine Lord was willing to endure such an accusation for our sake can not you bear this humiliation for the love of the Sacred Heart? What are your trials to His? I know yours are hard, and when I think over your case my heart bleeds for you, but offer to bear all for the Sacred Heart, and, trust me, you will come out of this trial with a reputation brighter than before."

Howard Hunter was strengthened by the sympathy and kindly tone of his superior, and determined to make the sacrifice; but his deliverance was nearer than he imagined.

CHAPTER XXI.

RECORDS TWO IMPORTANT EVENTS.

JONES waited impatiently for nightfall. The lagging minutes seemed as hours until he could put his project into execution. He was more anxious to do this, because he had noticed some ugly glances directed

toward him after supper before study that evening. He felt sure that Finch had already begun his counter-campaign. When recess came at the end of the second hour of evening studies, he crept out of the yard, and ran down to the old bridge.

"Take the upper path," whispered Buckley, "and wait till I come."

The night was dark, and there was a thick, white reek on the ground, although the stars overhead shone clearly. By taking the upper path the old bridge would be reached. This bridge had long been condemned, and was no longer used except by foot passengers. A temporary bridge for vehicles had been built about a hundred feet down the creek.

Jones gained the old bridge and waited, standing on the very spot where Hunter and his friends had stood that afternoon. He calculated that Buckley would arrive in fifteen or twenty minutes. The minutes appeared to lengthen themselves into hours. He was uneasy, and already began to feel regret for what he had done. He half determined to turn back. Suddenly he heard the footsteps of a man approaching. They were entirely unlike the springing tread of Buckley. It must be the prefect in search of him, he thought. He crouched down close to a post which supported the railing. If he was being looked for, the searcher might pass him in the mist without seeing him.

Without an instant's warning the dry-rotted post gave a crack, and the crouching figure, with a wild shriek, was hurled twenty feet to the boulders below.

The shadowy figure on the bridge stopped a moment when he heard the wild cry, and then passed ruth-

lessly over the bridge and into the darkness beyond. It was indeed Buckley. He was horror-struck at the catastrophe, but at that moment, with him, thoughts of self and personal safety predominated. Rapidly he argued that Jones must be dead from such a fall, and, if so, he might possibly become mixed up very awkwardly in the affair, and who could tell but that it might take a very ugly turn? He had no taste for defending himself against a charge of murder. So, without a tinge of pity for his companion, he left him to his fate and hurried away.

A long time the unfortunate boy lay there apparently lifeless. Had it not been that he alighted on an alder bush, his fall must have been immediately fatal. In about two hours, with a groan, he opened his eyes, upon regaining consciousness. The night was still intensely dark, and he could just distinguish the stone supports of the bridge towering above him. He was unable to move. One leg was powerless, and it seemed as if two ribs were broken.

A long time he lay groaning with pain. During the first few moments of consciousness he was filled with an ungovernable rage over his thwarted plans. As the night wore on he became more stiff and sore. Then he became frightened that perhaps he might die before being discovered. After a little while, he began to think that this accident was to be his punishment for his recent meanness. His whole conduct came up before his mind, and amid all his pain and dread, one by one his past misdeeds stood out clearly and boldly in his sharpened mental vision.

He was too well instructed to be uneasy about what had happened before his last confession. But that last

confession! How long ago it seemed now. Oh! if he had another—just one more chance—how different should be the future! Grace, always at hand, had begun to soften his heart. He began to suffer from intense thirst. He attempted to move to get near the streamlet that trickled musically, and which he could hear close by, but this only brought about an increase of agony, and with the words, "Mary, Jesus, mercy," on his lips, he swooned again.

In the gray of early morning a farm-hand was on his way over the bridge to work, and was frightened almost out of his wits to see a white, upturned face, streaked with blood, lying in the gully below. He ran as fast as his legs could carry him to the college.

"There's one of your boys lying dead under the old bridge. Looks as if he's been murdered," was the startling message he delivered.

Father Lovelace and Mr. Hillson hastened to the spot. The priest had taken with him the holy oils, and Mr. Hillson a small flask of brandy.

"At least there has been no violence," said Mr. Hillson with a sigh of satisfaction, as he saw on the bridge the broken post. Carefully they raised the poor boy's head and bathed his face.

"I am afraid he is dead," whispered the prefect.

"It is not sure yet," responded Father Lovelace, in low tones. He then placed his ear near the boy's heart.

"He lives," he said presently. "Dilute some brandy and wet his lips."

Under the stimulant there were signs of returning animation. A second application and the patient opened his eyes. Tenderly he was moved to a roadside house near the bridge. He had no sooner been

placed in bed than Stapleton and Hunter arrived. The former was immediately dispatched for a physician. When he recovered from the swoon which had followed on his removal from the ravine, Jones saw Hunter standing beside his bed. He gave a start, and his white face flushed. Hunter saw his embarrassment, and took his hand and silently pressed it.

"Are you badly hurt?"

"My leg and—my back. I don't deserve that—that you should—help me, Hunter," he said with a groan. "I've done—you—harm enough."

"We'll not talk of that now. It will all blow over soon. Don't think about it now."

"But it was all wrong—cowardly—can you forgive me?"

"Why not? Of course I can, and do," and Howard pressed his hand again.

"I don't—deserve this. I'm sorry—very sorry," and with a sigh of pain mingled with remorse, the sufferer closed his eyes again, and for a long time remained apparently in a state of coma.

The two boys remained with the sufferer all day. In the evening the college chaplain—a venerable, white-haired, fatherly man—came and heard the boy's confession. When it was finished, the two boys were called back to the room. Upon entering they saw tears in the eyes of the grand old Father, and a quiet smile on Jones's face.

"It was hard," said the patient, "that confession, but I promised God last night that if He spared my life I would go to confession. Now, please, give me a piece of writing-paper."

A fly-leaf from an old book was found, and a pencil.

Jones, with difficulty, then wrote something and gave it to the confessor, saying:

"Please, Father, give this to Mr. Hillson to-morrow morning."

As soon as Mr. Hillson had breakfasted, the following morning, he pinned the paper on the boys' bulletin board, outside the study hall door. Immediately a crowd of boys surged around, all trying to see what the notice contained. It could not have created more interest had it been the notification of a whole day's holiday. The paper read as follows:

"MR. HILLSON: SIR—Please put this on the board. I falsely said H. Hunter had stolen the candies. I and Buckley saw Deming get a letter from home and take out a bill and buy that box of caramels. I am sorry now for what I have done. I spread the report, but I am sorry now. Pray for me, boys.

"ROBT. JONES."

There was silence around the bulletin board for a few moments, until the boys realized the situation. It was the calm that precedes the storm.

"Hurrah for Hunter! hurrah!" shouted one of his admirers, in ecstasy. The cry was caught up instantly, and a vigorous cheer went up for Howard. Everybody pressed forward to shake Hunter's hand, thinking he was in the crowd. He was not there. He could not be found. The study hall, gymnasium, reading-room, washroom, billiard-room—every place was searched, but in vain. Where could he have gone?

At last Osborne, guessing where the hero of the hour might possibly be, ran up to the chapel, and found him kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament. As

soon as Howard had heard his name mentioned he slipped away and went to the chapel to thank God, first of all, for his exoneration. Osborne saw his face was wet with tears. He whispered to him to come down. Howard shook his head negatively. Then Osborne said the prefect wanted him, and he arose from his knees at once. Under the circumstances, we do not think the recording angel will have a *very* black mark against Osborne's name for that act.

It was just three minutes to study time when Howard came into the yard, and Mr. Hillson stood, watch in hand, by the big bell, ready to give the signal. As Howard came out, cheer after cheer greeted him, and all pressed forward to shake him by the hand. He stood blushing at the unexpected demonstration. It was eight o'clock, and yet Mr. Hillson did not ring the bell. Meantime the excitement grew. The surging crowd could not all get near the hero, and two sturdy fellows, in the height of their enthusiasm, hoisted the boy to their shoulders, and began a march across the yard. The prefect saw the movement and for once purposely failed in punctuality. The bell did not ring for ten minutes after time that morning—a thing almost unheard of at St. Cuthbert's. When it did ring, and Howard was set down from the shoulders of the two stalwarts, his fine feathers were very much ruffled. His tie was torn and his collar very badly rumpled, while his coat had a propensity to slip off.

"You had better run into port for repairs," said Mr. Hillson, as he laughingly handed him the key to the washroom. Of course Stapleton and Osborne and Selby had to assist in the repairing, and the four did not reappear in the study hall for a full half hour.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW AN IDEA WAS CARRIED OUT.

ABOUT six weeks after the events related in the last chapter, Stapleton, Selby, Osborne, and Laurence Ames were returning one day from the ball-field after an exciting game. Their bright uniforms and animated faces made them appear at their best. The four were fine types of early manhood.

"I have an idea," said Selby, as he ran his hand along the smooth side of a polished sacrifice bat.

"Catch it, and cage it. They're scarce," remarked Osborne.

"Does it hurt?" asked Stapleton, with assumed gravity.

"No; but it will, if you don't look out," and Selby held the bat in a threatening attitude.

"Which, the idea or the bat?"

"The bat, to be sure. Oh, I forgot. *Bruta carent intellectu*, which means, where there's no sense, there's no feeling."

"Umph! quite unfeeling, eh?" responded Stapleton, and he warded a thrust from the bat.

"But seriously," pursued Selby, "I have an idea that it would be a good thing to get up a picnic for Jones, now that he can move about a little, and invite Hunter. What do you say, gentlemen?"

Stapleton and Ames were silent, nor did Osborne venture an opinion.

"Well, what do you all think of it?"

"I don't know what to say," said Stapleton. "It

may be that Hunter would not care for it. He generously forgave and even visited Jones, but *this* may be expecting too much of him."

Stapleton, like all boys, recognized that a picnic—that is, a private picnic—demanded the utmost good-fellowship to make it anything more than a hollow sham. To forgive an injury and visit the injurer when in pain was one thing, but to go on a picnic with the same boy was to make him a boon companion, and this was quite another. This was the light in which Stapleton viewed the proposition.

"I think I can answer for Hunter," remarked Selby; "but we must not let him know about it until all is arranged. Perhaps the President won't grant it."

"Let's go and see him at once," suggested some one.

"All right; come along."

In one moment they were bounding across the yard, and in the next they were knocking at that official's door.

"What is the trouble, boys?" asked the gentle and scholarly Father.

"No trouble, Father," said Harry Selby.

"What, boys coming to the President without being in trouble!" he said, with a merry twinkle in his eye.

"Are you come to complain that Mr. Hillson does not give you enough penances? We can soon remedy that, you know."

"Mr. Hillson's just splendid, Father. We want to go on a picnic, sir," said Harry Selby nervously, plunging "*in medias res*."

"And I want to be at rest, and in heaven!"

There was almost pathos in this curious remark, which Selby was quick to note.

"We thought it would be nice to get up a little picnic at the Lake of the Woods for Rob Jones, Father, and invite Hunter and Finch."

The President saw immediately the charitable intention, and was touched. He began industriously cleaning his spectacles, thinking hard in the meantime. He was one of those men who would strain a point to make boys happy.

"But Jones can not walk to the Lake of the Woods. It is over three miles from where he is staying."

"Yes, Father; but we thought that perhaps we could get a pony-chaise to carry him and the basket."

The head of St. Cuthbert's then turned to his desk, and examined carefully the results of the preceding monthly examinations.

The boys' hearts sank, yet the examination seemed satisfactory, for he said:

"Well, I see no objection to your plan—for once, as an extraordinary thing. Would a cold ham and some coffee do? You may go next Tuesday, if the weather is fine. I'll see the refectorian and tell him to get a hamper ready."

"Thank you, Father; thank you, thank you," came a chorus of voices. "We'll, we'll all—"

They seemed at a loss what to say.

"We'll all—pray for you," ventured one.

"Thank you, boys; we all need the prayers of one another. I grant you this privilege to encourage charity among you. Now I give you express injunctions to enjoy yourselves all you can."

"Never fear, Father, we will do that, sure enough."

With more thanks the boys left the room, and were soon bounding across the yard to where Hunter sat.

"Say, old fellow, great news! We are going to get up a picnic for you and Jones and Finch next Tuesday at the Lake of the Woods, and we are to have the pony-chaise, and ham and coffee for dinner. Hoopla!"

"Can't stand it, boys," said Hunter.

- All became serious at once.

"We—we thought—you wouldn't mind going with Jones, and he would like it, I'm sure," said Stapleton, very earnestly.

"But I can't stand it," persisted Hunter.

"What's the matter, Howard? I thought you had forgiven Jones that affair."

"That's all right. I never think about that now. But all the same, I can't stand it."

All this time Howard's face was far from serious. It was an enigma to the others.

"Why? Don't you want Finch? It was you, you know, who straightened him out when he was going to the bad."

"I don't mind Finch."

"Well, what's wrong, then?"

"My digestive apparatus wouldn't stand it."

"What?"

"Why, a pony and chaise for dinner. How on earth do you expect me to eat that?"

"Oh, oh, oh!"

Howard slipped away, and the next moment they were in full hue and cry after him across the yard.

The boys need not have been anxious about Hunter's acceptance. Of course he was willing to go. It was arranged that Finch should invite Jones, and that evening he went to see the invalid.

The meeting between these two quondam compan-

ions was awkward enough during the first few minutes. Jones was sitting in an easy-chair, with a pair of crutches beside him. Hunter, who had come with Finch, remained outside during the first interview. The handsome but now pale face of Jones blushed a deep red when he saw his old companion. There was an awkward silence.

"You were right to break from me, Finch," he said at length.

"I thought so at the time, but I am very sorry for your accident," the other replied.

"Ah! since then I've had time to think, and I have come to see that it was a just punishment for me. How did the boys take it?"

"You should have seen how the boys cheered Hunter when he was cleared by your note."

"Why! Hunter never told me anything about that."

"Just like him."

"But what did they say of me?"

"They—they did not cheer for you."

"Of course not—"

"But many said that after all it was quite a manly act on your part to send that letter, and I think you have not lost much—that is, you have regained all you had lost in the general esteem. Of course, they talked a good deal about you at first, but when they saw you tried to undo the mischief there was many a kind word for you."

"And what do you think of me?"

Finch hesitated to reply to so direct a question. At length he said:

"I was like the others, and said a good many ugly things about you. Then I began to think that I was

but little better, so I kept quiet. I'm sorry you broke your leg, anyway."

"But I think the accident has done me good. I am quite different now, and so are you. I think we both shall act differently in the future."

"I mean to try to be different," said Finch, and he meant it.

"The President says," resumed Jones, "that I may remain at college if I wish, but I don't think I can face the boys again after what I have done."

"Have you not already suffered for all that? But I have something else to talk about just now. There is a surprise for you on foot. The doctor says you can safely be driven to the Lake of the Woods next Tuesday. So on that day we are coming to carry you off body and bones."

Jones was quite affected by the boys' kindness, and his eyes looked suspiciously moist, but then, you know, he had been suffering a long time, and was weak. He, too, had the idea—it was a St. Cuthbert tradition—that a picnic was a manifestation of the utmost good-fellowship, and he appreciated keenly the kindness intended.

Tuesday was a bright day with a cool breeze—an ideal day for a picnic. About nine o'clock the pony-chaise drove up to the cottage. The good woman of the house was very much surprised. She had heard nothing of the arrangements, and thought they had come to take her patient away. She had grown very fond of the boy.

"Sure now, ye young gentlemen won't be after takin' my boy off wid ye? He's not fit to be going yet."

"No danger, mother," said Stapleton. "We are

going to try an experiment on him. I am going to take him about two miles down the road, and then upset the rig and let him walk back."

"My! my! but you'll kill him entirely! His leg's not so strong as that yet. You'll kill him for sure," and she began to wring her hands. She was soon pacified, however, and helped Stapleton and the others get the boy into the chaise. She then propped him up with pillows with as much tenderness and solicitude as if he had been her own son.

"Now, if anything does be happening to him, I'll blame yez, mind."

Stapleton assumed all responsibility, and gaily drove away, and arrived at the Lake of the Woods without any mishap.

The rest of the party had already arrived, and as soon as the vehicle came to a standstill all made a rush for the precious hamper. The good old refectorian had gone to the very limit of his authority in making up that hamper.

"Here's a feast fit for the gods," said Osborne, as he began to prepare a lunch. Boys are perpetually hungry at a picnic.

"Here's ham, and chicken, and apples, and pickles, lemons and sugar, and coffee, and—ice," he continued in a sort of rhythmic surprise, "and here's some California grapes," he wound up in a shout of triumph.

"My! but isn't that Brother just a Jim Dandy," was the exclamation of Stapleton, and the rest of the company added their assent by giving three ringing cheers for that same worthy.

Was there every such a glorious day or such a glorious time! The old woods at the water's edge echoed

again and again with the laughter and shouts of the merry party. The bright sunshine, the clear, sparkling water of the lake, and the cool, green woods, all conspired to raise their already joyous spirits, while the perfect goodfellowship which prevailed put the finishing touch to their contentment.

"It is a good thing that idea of Selby's was caught and caged after all, wasn't it?" remarked Osborne.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW OSBORNE WENT BATHING.

WHEN noon came the picnickers were as hungry as if they had had no lunch. Table, or rather cloth, was spread on the grass, and Osborne busied himself in making the coffee, and soon its rich aroma pervaded the atmosphere.

"Watch that boiling, will you, while I go and get some sugar," that worthy remarked to one standing near the gypsy fire.

Osborne soon fished out a paper bag from the hamper and dumped half the contents into the coffee-pot, and began stirring vigorously. Like a good housekeeper, he saved some for a second brewing.

"All ready, boys, let's fall to," shouted Stapleton, who acted the part of tutelary deity of the tablecloth.

"Let's say the Angelus first," suggested Selby.

All uncovered their heads and repeated their beautiful prayer in silence. It was a touching sight to see those laughing, chattering boys, full of fun and glee,

suddenly, without any incongruity, for a moment become serious, and according to the time-honored custom of every Catholic college, pay their midday veneration to the Queen of Heaven. Grace was then said, and an onslaught was made on the provisions. And how they disappeared! One would think the whole company had been fasting for a week.

"Lemonade! lemonade!" shouted Frank. "Who'll take lemonade, made with a sp—"

The venerable rhyme was not finished. He was choked off by Ames and Hunter.

"Coffee! Hot, fresh coffee! Who'll have coffee!" shouted Osborne in opposition. Most of the boys preferred the coffee as the greater luxury under the circumstances.

Rob Jones took a cup of it, tasted it (its odor was delicious) and quietly put it down on the carriage seat beside him.

Hunter tasted his. "Eu-tch!"

Stapleton sipped a little, and there followed a spluttering sound as he spat out the remainder of the mouthful.

"What's the matter with you fellows?" asked Osborne, who thought they were all acting in concert in order to quiz him.

"Matter! why, just taste this stuff. Do you want to poison us?"

Osborne tasted the savory-smelling beverage, and his face was a study. He immediately made a dive for the hamper.

"By the great horn spoon! but if I haven't put salt into that coffee instead of sugar!"

"Score one for Osborne," said Hunter.

"I will have to close up shop," said the now crest-fallen coffee-cook, "and refer you to the lemonade man over the way," and he lugubriously dumped the spoiled contents of the coffee-pot into the water, to the infinite amusement of the whole party.

"There's a libation to Neptune," he remarked, as he shook out the last dregs over a bank which was about three feet high, into the water. He was giving the coffee-pot a last vigorous shake, when a large sod beneath his feet gave way, and he lost his balance. He fanned the air wildly with the coffee-pot, but it was of no avail. He fell, more or less gracefully, into the water below. All, except Jones, made a rush to save him, but they were too late. They could do nothing, when they arrived at the brink of the bank, but hold their sides with laughter.

"Come back to Erin, mavourneen!" shouted Stapleton.

"Come here and I'll hang you out to dry," said Ames.

John Osborne struggled up the bank and cut a sorry figure.

"Why, Johnnie, your mother wouldn't know you," said the tease, Ames.

"I don't think she would, just now. I've got a mind to get even with you fellows, and shake myself like a wet dog."

But he didn't do so. As soon as the laughter had somewhat subsided, the interrupted meal was resumed, and enjoyed all the more for the mishap.

After dinner Ames and Stapleton strolled away to hunt for crinoids and fossils. Osborne was busy "drying himself."

"Howard," said Finch, "Jones says he does not think that he will come back to college any more."

"No, I don't think I can face the boys again," said Jones, sadly.

Howard Hunter was silent for a moment. He scarcely knew what to advise.

"I think," he said, after a considerable pause, "the best thing you can do is to come right back; that is, if the President allows."

"But that's all settled. He left it to me."

"Then come."

"Why?"

"Because I think it will be more manly. You did wrong once," and the memory of all the wrong he had suffered flashed over him, "but since, you have tried to do better."

"But the boys; what will they say?"

"Whatever they like, whether you are there or not. Come, and live down the bad impressions you have made. It will do you good."

"But if they should throw it up to me?"

"Stand it like a man. Look here, Jones, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but haven't I had the most occasion to talk against you?"

"Indeed you have, Howard," responded the changed boy, sorrowfully.

"And if I forget all that, don't you think others who are not so interested will forget it, too? Then, your generous letter put you all right with the boys."

Jones thought a long time, and finally remarked:

"I feel a pretty mean sort of a fellow, but—but I'll face it. After all, if there is anything ugly said to me it will be only what I deserve."

So it was arranged that Rob Jones, as soon as he was well enough, should come back to the college.

The picnic day passed all too quickly, especially for Osborne, the greater part of whose time was taken up in drying his clothes. At six o'clock more coffee was made, and a self-appointed committee watched the mixing of the sugar this time. As Osborne sipped his coffee, this time with a triumphant smile on his face, Rob Jones, who was in the highest of spirits since his resolution to return to school had been taken, ventured a joke.

"See here, Osborne, you don't follow the advice you give to others. You know you had no permission to go into the water, and you did not look any fellow in the eye and ask him to say it was all right, either."

Osborne looked up suddenly, and there was a slight shade of anger in his eyes, but he saw immediately from Jones' manner that he was in good faith. Then he realized what it probably cost the convalescent boy to refer to those unpleasant days. None but a brave and thoroughly earnest boy would have ventured to do so under the circumstances.

"If you hadn't that broken leg to nurse, you would certainly go home with a broken head," replied Osborne, laughingly.

It was arranged that Howard Hunter and Finch should drive Jones back to the cottage. Ames and Osborne started for home together. Stapleton and Selby separated from the rest, intending to take a longer route homeward. They walked along through the beautiful woods, enjoying almost in silence the delicious vocal calm of the dying light. It was getting to be that time of day when there are only half lights,

when they saw before them an object slowly moving forward in the green lane.

"What's that ahead of us?" asked Selby.

"I can't make it out. Let us hurry and overtake it."

They quickened their pace, and soon found the object of their curiosity was a very small girl about nine years old, carrying a bundle of wood which was far too heavy for her slender strength. She was pale and looked sickly, and was very poorly clad.

"Little girl, that's too much for you to carry," said Selby.

The child looked up wearily.

"Let me help you. Where are you going?" and he took the load of wood from her.

"Oh! I'm so tired," said the little creature with a sigh.

"I should think you were," said Stapleton. "Where do you live?"

"In the shanty up there, sir," pointing to a dilapidated and apparently abandoned shanty, about five hundred yards away.

"I guess you are tired. Come here," said Stapleton. The frightened child came slowly, looked into his face in the gathering darkness, and seemed to take courage. Before she knew what had happened he had caught her in his arms, and began carrying her toward the hovel. She nestled there confidently.

"What is your name, little one?"

"Mabel, sir."

"But your other name?"

"Drummond, sir. Mabel Drummond."

"Does your father live here?"

"Ma does, but pa isn't often at home now."

The little girl was very light, and Frank saw that she was very weak and looked hungry.

"Now jump down, little one, and tell your mother some one is here."

Mabel Drummond walked slowly to the shanty, and a poor woman soon appeared at the door.

"Won't you come in, gentlemen, and rest? God knows it's little I have to offer you."

Frank Stapleton and Harry Selby went inside, and for the first time in their joyous lives they stood face to face with abject poverty. An old table leaned against the wall. Two stools, and some logs covered with leaves and straw, was all the furniture that was to be seen. Both boys noticed that there were marks of refinement and good breeding in the woman before them, and they were sure that little Mabel had not always been so poorly clad as now. They stood motionless and silent on the earthen floor. These two strong, tall, healthy, upright lads made the roof seem all the lower, and the contrast between plenty and poverty all the greater. The mother of Mabel did not seem inclined to talk, and the boys were at a loss what to say or do.

"You seem to be very badly off," was the somewhat unfortunate remark of Stapleton.

"Yes, poor as rats," said the woman with sudden passion, "and left like rats to die of starv—" a choking sob stopped further utterance. Her hollow eyes and thin hands told the story all too well.

Frank and Harry were shocked—thrilled. Could such misery exist so near them, and they had been feasting all day!

"We will help you if you will let us."

"And be taken for beggars," she replied, almost savagely. "My husband would kill me first."

As both boys were searching their pockets for some money, a sound of some one approaching was heard outside.

"Run, Mabel, and see if that is your father coming," said the poor woman.

The child went and was immediately followed by her mother, who eagerly asked her husband:

"Well, John, did you find any work?"

"No, curse it. I'm desperate to-night, and feel like putting a bullet through my head. I tried all day to get something to do, and everywhere was treated as a tramp or a thief. Curse the day I ever saw the country!"

"My God! are we to starve to death?" the boys inside heard the woman exclaim in an undertone. The man began again to rave against his fate.

"Hush! John, there's some one inside the shanty."

CHAPTER XXIV.

FRANK AND HARRY IN A NEW ROLE.

WHEN Drummond entered the hut the two boys saw at a glance that he was superior to his present condition. His style of speech and correct, not unpleasing enunciation showed him to have received an education above that of the ordinary workingman. It was plain to them that at the present moment he was at his worst. He was surprised to see the two boys

there. Frank Stapleton explained that they had met the little girl up the road, and had helped to carry her load of wood.

"Much obliged. She's pretty young for such work. I've been trying to get work for several days, without success. The world is hard, and I feel like turning against it."

The boys perceived that the man's trouble was making him desperate. They decided to leave.

"We'll be back again soon," remarked Frank as they went out. Selby, as he was passing the little girl, put two dollars in her hand, and was gone before she realized what had been done.

For a long time the two boys walked on in silence. Here was a revelation to these bright, happy youths, and each in his own way was learning his first real lesson of that side of human life to which they had hitherto been absolute strangers. They had that evening received their first insight into the mystery of pain and suffering.

There are periods in boy-life which amount to epochs; when great and grand thoughts and resolutions surge through the mind and will, and raise the subjects above themselves, so that afterward they are never the same as they were before. They have broader and more comprehensive views of the sacredness of life and of its duties and responsibilities.

Upon arriving at the college the two boys went directly to the President and related their experiences.

"People within so short a distance from us, and so destitute! This is terrible! We must see about them the first thing to-morrow morning."

"That may be too late, Father," urged Stapleton.

"The poor woman actually said they were starving."

"But everybody is in bed now." The President was perplexed.

"We will go back with something to eat for them, Father, most willingly. That's why we came to see you to-night."

"Good boys; but you are too tired now. You have been out all day as it is."

"That's nothing, sir. We will start right off if you will have a basket of food made ready."

"Very well, lads. When you come home, go to the infirmary and take a long sleep in the morning."

In less than half an hour the two were trudging back again on their errand of mercy. When they reached their destination they saw Drummond sitting on the doorstep, with his elbows on his knees, and his hands supporting his drooping head. His disheveled hair hung down over his face, and he looked a picture of despondency.

"We are back again, Mr. Drummond," said Stapleton, cheerily, "and have brought you a basket of food."

The remark, though well intended, was unfortunate, but then, these college lads were inexperienced in these matters.

"You can take it home again, then," Drummond muttered, sullenly. "I want charity from no man. I want *work*."

Harry and Frank were at a loss what to do.

"My good man, I am really very sorry for you," said Harry. "Have you tried at the college?"

"The big building away down the road? Yes, and it was all the same; they are all the same. They looked

like ministers, but they gave me no work. I begin to doubt if there's a God at all, or an overruling Providence. Why should I and my wife and innocent child have to suffer in this way? We are not pariahs. We have broken no law, and yet we are worse off than the blackest of outlaws," and there was a fierce glitter in the man's eye.

Pride was fighting against his love for wife and child. He could not bring himself to accept alms, because he was conscious that he could earn good wages if he could but secure work. And yet he saw his wife pining away before his eyes for want of good and sufficient food.

"Hush! John, you will wake Mabel if you talk so loud," said his wife, appearing at the door.

The two good Samaritans were still at a loss what to do. Presently Stapleton hit upon the following ruse:

"Mr. Drummond," he said, in a most conciliatory tone, "if you won't take what we have brought, perhaps you would oblige us by letting Mrs. Drummond cook us just a little of the meat. We have been outdoors all day, and now came straight from the college with this basket."

The bare facts of the statement were true. It is not necessary to scrutinize too closely the implication. The man's inherent good breeding immediately asserted itself, and they had at least gained the inside of the citadel.

"Ah! there's Mabel," said Frank, as he entered the shanty.

"Please don't wake her," pleaded the mother. "She seems quite unwell to-night, and I am afraid she is

going to have a fever. God knows what we shall do if she does," and the poor woman shuddered.

While the meat was being prepared the two boys tried to learn from the father the story of his troubles. He had but recently come from the north of Ireland, and expected to find this land and everybody in it simply rolling in riches. Sharpers at Castle Garden, New York, had relieved him of most of his money, and he soon discovered that he had to work against strong labor organizations. He had traveled from town to town seeking work which he rarely found, and when successful it lasted only for a short time. He was well educated, and had left a fairly comfortable home in Ireland in the illusory search for riches.

"You won't take charity," said Harry Selby, suddenly, "and I admire you for it."

The man looked surprised and gratified. Here was a person who could understand his motives of self-respect and pride.

"Now I will tell you what I will do," continued the boy. "My father is a railroad man of some influence. I will write to him and ask him to get you some employment. In the meantime there can be nothing derogatory to your finest feeling of self-respect if you will *borrow* this ten dollars, will there?"

After all it was a crude attempt at finesse, but Harry thought he was doing splendidly, and he was, for he had gained his man, who replied:

"You are good boys; but suppose I never pay you back?"

"Then I shall be perfectly sure—now this is *business*, mind—I shall be perfectly sure that you were unavoidably prevented. Is that a bargain, eh?"

The man smiled at their notion of business, nevertheless he was overcome by their ingenuousness. "Y-e-s," he said, slowly, "I'll take it on these conditions."

"All right. Then let us draw up an I. O. U. for the amount. Let me see how much it is. Ten dollars in cash, and two in supplies—twelve dollars."

Stapleton looked on in admiration. He was astonished at Selby's suddenly-developed business capacity. Many a business man, regarding the transaction as a merely business one, would have been astonished, too. As soon as the note was signed Harry took out his watch and turned suddenly to Stapleton and said:

"Good gracious, Frank, do you know what the time is? I declare, it's nearly ten! How long we have been talking! We must hurry home. You'll excuse us to-night, Mr. Drummond. I didn't know it was so late. The Head will surely be angry with us, or at least anxious about us. Good night. We will come again before long. Kiss Mabel for us when she awakes."

"You had better take this stick with you," said Drummond to Harry; "it may protect you against dogs."

Harry laughingly accepted the cane.

"God bless you, young gentlemen," spoke Mrs. Drummond fervently, as they passed out into the night.

The stars were bright overhead, and the summer night was pleasant. The boys were happy, and both felt as elated as if they had just made a general confession.

"I wonder if the recording angel up there," said

Harry Selby, as he looked up at the countless stars, "will put down much against us by way of 'white lies' for what we have said to-night. Oh! by the way, give me a match."

"You are not going to smoke, are you?"

"No, but give me a match."

A match was handed to him, and a little flame illuminated the surrounding darkness for an instant, and a puff of wind blew away in ashes all that was left of the I. O. U.

"Nothing like burning your bridges behind you," remarked Harry.

"But it is your bridge, not mine. Why didn't I think to get some money, too?"

They finally agreed to go halves in the good work, and Frank was to hand over five dollars to Harry the next day. They walked home in a state of exaltation, for, the first time in their lives, they had that night tasted the luxury of doing good.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROB JONES RETURNS TO COLLEGE.

THE next morning when Harry Selby awoke after his long sleep in the infirmary he saw by his bedside the stick which he had laughingly accepted from Drummond as a protection against prowling dogs. He was surprised and delighted to find the head beautifully carved. It resembled a man's head with a full

beard, and a snake coiling around the throat. Several boys, as soon as they saw it, wanted Harry to sell it to them. This gave him an idea which he immediately put into execution. He was sure that Drummond had carved that stick during his hours of enforced idleness. Why could he not carve many others, and thus temporarily support himself until a more permanent occupation had been procured?

"I'll sell this cane if any one will bid high enough for it," he said on the spur of the moment.

"Twenty-five cents," said Ames.

"Too low."

"Fifty cents," shouted Frank Stapleton, who at once caught an insight into his friend's proceeding.

"No, too low yet," responded the impromptu auctioneer, with a knowing look toward his especial friends.

"Seventy-five cents," shouted Ames.

"Going—going—gone! Now, boys," said Selby, "I am willing to take a limited number of orders for walking-sticks with fancy heads like this one, at the same price."

The boys immediately surmised there was some charitable scheme behind it all.

"Put me down for one," remarked Finch.

"'Twould be hard to put you down. I'll put your name down."

"Oh! oh!" shouted several. Quite a number of boys gave their orders for the really beautiful sticks, and soon the young factor had secured orders to the amount of nearly ten dollars.

Poor Drummond was delighted, as much with the ingenious charity of his newly-found friends, as he was

with the opportunity of earning an honest penny. In the meantime Harry Selby was impatiently awaiting an answer from his father. A letter came at the end of two weeks. Mr. Selby, in order to encourage his son, agreed to give the man employment, at first in the railway shops, and afterward, if he proved trustworthy, at the Selby residence, where he and his wife were to occupy a neat cottage in the rear of the premises. He suggested, as a precaution, that Drummond only should first come to Chicago for a few weeks, and later on he was to move his family. Harry ran with glee to tell the good news and assure the Drummonds that there were better days in store for them. He felt a curious sense of importance when the President permitted him to go to the village and look around for a suitable temporary lodging for Mabel and her mother. The day after the good news arrived Mr. Drummond started for Chicago. Two weeks later Harry received another letter from his father telling him that he was much pleased with the man, and told him to send Mrs. Drummond and her daughter at once, he having taken the father into his personal employment.

Mrs. Drummond departed at the earliest moment. As they were leaving, Harry lifted Mabel into the railway carriage and gave her a paper of candies.

"Good-bye, Mr. Selby," said the child, "may the gentle Jesus, meek and mild, bless you—'cause you is so good to papa and mamma. Kiss me now," and the little one pursed up her lips in a most innocent fashion.

Two or three of the college boys, who happened to be at the depot, laughed heartily at Harry as he blushing bent down his head and kissed the little girl.

"Good-bye, Mabel. I shall see you again before very long. The holidays are not very far off now."

"I shall never forget your kindness, sir," said the grateful mother, "and if ever the occasion arises I shall try to prove to you that I am not ungrateful."

Harry felt doubly awkward now, and replied, "Oh! not at all," and retired in confusion.

By this time Rob Jones was sufficiently recovered from his injuries to be able to come back to school. He arrived during class hours one morning and went immediately to the President's room.

"I don't deserve, Father, to be treated like this," he said nervously. "Every one is kind, but I feel that I should not be here after all I have done. I have been pretty mean, especially toward Hunter."

"But, my lad, hasn't Hunter forgiven and forgotten all that, and have you not become friends long ago?"

"Yes, Father, that's so, and I'm going to try and do better, but I am afraid that every one, or at least many, will jeer at me when I go into the yard."

"I do not think you know our boys well enough yet," remarked the Father, not unkindly. "If you should meet with any of the treatment you dread, remember that by your fault you have deserved it, and take it as part of your punishment. But I think you need have no fear. Go now to the chapel, and ask our divine Lord to strengthen you in your good resolutions. You have chosen the manlier part in coming back, and by God's grace you will profit by the lesson you have learned. Go, and God bless you."

The penitent boy felt strengthened by the kindly, earnest words of the President, and with difficulty stifled a sob as he left the room.

It was a critical moment for Jones when the bell rang for the end of class. He was seated on a bench in the yard, when the surging crowds came pouring out of the class rooms. Many did not see him in their usual rush to the study hall to put away their books. Frank Stapleton was the first to notice him. He did not go over to him at once, but waited for Howard Hunter. Together these two walked over toward the bench, followed by many other boys who watched curiously what they supposed to be the first meeting between the two former enemies.

Howard was aware that many eyes were on him at that moment. He knew also that his reception of the returned invalid would be the key to the action of the majority of the boys in the college. Just at that moment—and there are some unheroic moments in all our lives—he felt the strongest repugnance to meeting Jones. He had visited the wounded boy, forgiven him, helped him, and spent the day at the Lake of the Woods with him, and yet at that moment there arose an intense aversion—the more intense as it was so unaccountable—to the boy who had wronged him so deeply.

By a singular coincidence Jones was sitting within two or three feet from the very spot where he had been knocked down by Hunter in that subsequently bitterly regretted burst of anger. Perhaps association of ideas had something to do with it, for all the insults, all the agony, and the shame Hunter had suffered from this boy crowded into his memory with lightning-like rapidity.

Should he turn upon his heel, and leave Jones to himself? He was terribly tempted to do so. He was

walking slowly in the direction of Jones all this time, and Stapleton was surprised at his sudden silence. Frank did not know of the struggle going on within the breast of his friend.

Suddenly Howard remembered Mr. Hillson's advice when his days were darkest. Yes, he would offer this last bitterness to the Sacred Heart. With an ejaculatory prayer, he determined to show that all ill-feeling was over and forgotten. There are moments in men's lives when heroes are made. This was a crucial moment for Howard, and unknown and unseen by those around him he made of himself a hero.

Hunter had never spoken to Jones publicly since he had knocked him down, and very many of the boys knew absolutely nothing of the reconciliation that had taken place. All seemed waiting to see what Howard would do. Many had already looked coldly and askance at the lame boy.

"Hello, Rob," said Howard. "I am heartily glad to see you back again, old fellow," and he took his hand and shook it demonstratively.

"Gracious! did you see that?" said one of Jones' former admirers to one of the old clique.

"Guess the 'goody-goodies' have caught Jones after all. If so, all our fun is up," remarked another of the delectable gang.

Happily Jones did not hear these remarks. The warm public recognition by Howard Hunter was keenly appreciated, and the sparkle and glitter of his eyes spoke volumes, and told more eloquently of his gratitude than any words could have done.

"Look!" said one of the undesirable crowd. "There's Finch shaking hands with the fellow, too. See how

he stands with one hand on Hunter's shoulder. I suppose they have caught him, too."

It was a happy catching for Finch, as is already known. All, as Howard had mentally predicted, had taken their cue from him, and Jones was busy for several minutes shaking hands and receiving congratulations. His fine features and clear complexion, now more than usually pale from his late suffering, was steeped in a rosy blush which the excitement of the moment and the feeling of gratitude had occasioned. He certainly looked a handsome boy just then.

And Howard! He had conquered himself in doing what his natural inclination had pointed out to him emphatically as most distasteful. Yet the repugnance had not ceased, and now he felt the strongest temptation to get away. This he could have done now quite gracefully. But the fact is, he was frightened at this sudden feeling and could not understand it. The nobleness of his generous and pure heart prompted him to further acts of secret heroism.

He determined at whatever cost to himself to remain with Jones until the dinner bell rang—and he did so. By that time the strange feeling of disgust and repugnance had worn away, and he was heartily thankful that he had not yielded to the impression. In the conflict between natural inclination and generosity the latter triumphed, and although the secret war had been keen and hidden from every human eye, the courageous boy knew that he was stronger for having fought it down. Once conquered, the repugnance did not return. He afterward stated to one of his dearest friends that no such feeling toward Jones returned during the rest of the school year, or ever afterward.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW MIKE FENLEY DREAMED A DREAM.

THE reappearance of Rob Jones, and the kindly treatment he had received, had a good effect on that class of boys at St. Cuthbert's who, while not essentially bad, admired everything they deemed "tough;" which word for them had the meaning of "manly." These boys were hero-worshippers in a certain way, but their misfortune was that their ideals were false. They learned, however, in time, that popularity was not gained by violating all the college rules at random, but by the reverse. The more these restless spirits kept within bounds the more friends they found. The fact is that the disappearance of Buckley, and the change of front assumed by Finch, and, after his return, by Jones, purified the moral atmosphere, and for the rest of the year the finest kind of college spirit prevailed.

We may, therefore, in this chapter turn our attention for once to one or two of the minor lights and shades of college life, feeling sure that, for real boys, these lighter and more humorous episodes will be relished as heartily as the more somber shadows of the drama.

Not long after the event related in the foregoing chapter a peculiar scene was observed to be taking place one morning, after breakfast, in the yard. Almost every boy appeared to have taken a dose of laughing-gas. The usual games had no attraction for the nonce, and the boys were divided into small knots and groups, each one of which appeared to have its orator, and

from which, ever and anon, little explosions of laughter could be heard.

Whoever has had the good fortune to live in a well-disciplined boarding college will be aware that next to the chapel the dormitory is the place most sacred to silence. To be told to get out of bed and stand on the floor near the prefect's bed, for even whispering, was considered the maximum of disgrace among the big boys. So great a disgrace was incurred by this particular penance that it was rarely merited, and more rarely imposed.

A big, brawny, but good natured, country boy had recently arrived at St. Cuthbert's. It was his first experience away from home, and it was voted by the wiseacres that he was decidedly "green." No matter if he knew all about and could talk intelligently of subsoiling, rotation of crops, and excel in showing the points of a good horse; no matter if he could hold his own at a chopping or logging bee against all comers; no matter if he could bring home the highest price for his load of wheat, he was voted "green." Why? Forsooth he had never worn kid gloves, he held collars and cuffs as superfluities, and was in blissful ignorance of theaters and cigarettes. Therefore he must be green, and was unanimously voted to be so.

Naturally, the restraint of college life was hard on this child of nature, and many were the blunders he made in consequence. His name was Mike Fenley, and one day Mr. Hillson was almost stupefied by the following observation from him:

"Say, mister, I'll give ye two dollars for a good bed for the winter." It must be remembered that it was now near midsummer.

"You will do what?"

"I'll give ye two dollars for a good bed for the winter. I can't get my sleep nohow on them wire things. I feel as how I am going right through every time I move."

"You never slept on such a bed in your life before," replied the prefect. "Don't you know those are the finest wire mattresses that are made, and are considered a luxury?"

"Still I'm afraid they'll let me through some night. Won't you let me make a shake-down in the hay-mow in the barn yonder?"

"Look here, Mike, you will get used to luxury in time. If I let you sleep in the hay-mow some more delicate boy than you would want to sleep in the field with the gate open, and so catch cold." The son of the backwoods had a glimmering notion that he was being quizzed, and so dropped the matter.

The night before all the explosive laughter in the yard, Fenley had slept in a bed close to the wall. Both lights had been put out. The prefect and his assistant were sitting in the dark waiting for all the boys to drop off to sleep. There was no sound in all the large dormitory except the heavy breathing, and an occasional snore of those who had already fallen asleep, and the soft rattle of the beads that Mr. Hillson was reciting during his vigil. About one-third of the sixty boys were already asleep. Fenley's loud breathing told that he was already in a state of unconsciousness as to external things.

Suddenly in the stillness there came from Fenley that peculiar and almost inexpressible sound used by plowmen when urging horses in the furrow, and which

is represented as nearly as any combination of letters will allow by pronouncing the following word:

"Tschk."

There was a general titter in the dormitory, and the prefect immediately went in the direction of the sound. He had not gone many steps when, from the same stentorian lungs, came a most emphatic demonstration that the sleeper was at home, at least in his dreams, at, to him, the more congenial occupation of plowing. Suddenly the sleepers in the other beds, as well as those who were awake, were startled by a hearty, full-lunged vigorous shout:

"Get up! Get up, Doll—Meg! Gee-long!"

A spontaneous burst of laughter followed this remarkable outbreak.

"Ssh! Silence!" said the prefect, as soon as he could control himself, for he was unable to resist laughing as heartily as the rest.

"We want to make a request, sir," said Harry Selby, as he, Hunter, Osborne, and several others came up to the prefect the next morning.

"Well, Harry, what's your litany to-day?"

"You see, sir, what a lot of fun Fenley's dream last night has given us. You said the other day, sir, that those who dance should pay the piper."

"Well?"

"We want to do the penance for Fenley, because we have taken out of it more fun than he has."

"But who said there would be a penance?"

"He broke silence in the dormitory, sir, and that is never let off."

"Intentionally?"

"No. He was asleep."

"How can he deserve a penance then? He did not mean to break silence, did he?"

"No, sir; but many of us don't mean to break the rules. We don't think, and we get the penance all the same."

"But do you not see the difference? You could think. It is quite different with one asleep. Poor Fenley is among new faces, and in a new world to him; what more natural that his mind, when he is asleep, should go back to the scenes of his early life, and he again be among the noblest friends of the animal creation—among his horses? Of course, it was a material transgression of the rule of silence, but by no means a formal one. Treat Fenley well, boys, for he may have greater trials than we may be aware of."

"But it was so funny, we can't help laughing."

"No harm in that, but do not do it offensively, or wound his feelings."

CHAPTER XXVII.

HOWARD HUNTER STATES HIS VIEWS.

IN after life, when the mind is seared with vexations and the heart timid about the future; when we begin to find, or long ago have found, that getting along is laborious and uphill work; that success is illusive; when we long, and oh! so anxiously, for a few quiet hours of surcease from care; when we heartily wish that for once "time will turn back in its flight"—at such

a time who does not revert to his long passed school days, to the pleasant time when he was really free from the cares of life? How like an oasis this period appears in the after years of life! How roseate looks the past, more so than the future appeared to us when we were young.

Of the happy times that fond memory recalls none are lingered over so lovingly by the now grown man in his few moments of leisure as those calm and glorified Sunday afternoons of his college days. There is nothing pleasanter in the memory. There is nothing more beautiful in the reality. The quiet game, the easy ramble with a few, dearly loved companions, the delicious companionship of a book in the shade of the spreading oak. Dull is the boy who does not appreciate these things. Trust him not. The consciousness of having sanctified the day by Mass and holy communion gives a species of exaltation to the mind. The flowers look brighter, the trees and luxuriant grass greener on that day than on any other. The very insects seem more vocally joyous.

On just such an idyllic day, on a particular Sunday afternoon, there were few boys in the yard at St. Cuthbert's. A quiet almost equal to the deserted stillness of vacation time hung around the place. A few groups of boys in twos and threes quietly walked up and down the yard. A few sat in the shade. The afternoon sun made every window resemble a sheet of red-hot copper.

"What a quiet crowd," said Frank Stapleton. It was a few days after the return of Jones to college. A small company of our particular friends were lounging on a green spot under the shade of a fine beech tree on

the famous "walk" close to the college and in view of the athletic ground and track.

"Just look across the field," continued the speaker; "there is only one game of lawn tennis going on. For the last hour not more than four boys have passed on the walk here, and three of these were reading. Strange, isn't it?"

"Not so very. It's Sunday, and everybody likes to enjoy the quiet, and there happens to be no game going on to-day. You have your finger in a book at this very minute," remarked Howard Hunter.

"Oh, yes. I was running through, for the second time, Farrar's 'Eric Williams.'"

"And what is your opinion of it?" asked Clavering.

"It's really hard to say," was the reply. "The book is clever and has a great fascination for me. It is well done, but—" and he paused.

"But what?" asked Clavering, anxious to see if Stapleton's views coincided with his own.

"I don't know exactly. There's an awful sadness in the book. Don't you think so, Hunter?"

"That's true," replied Howard Hunter, thus appealed to; "it is sad throughout and has a sadder end; but that does not form my chief objection to the book. I dislike its tendency to naturalism. But, pshaw! this sounds like preaching, and you don't want that kind of thing from me."

"Go on, go on, Hunter. It's not preaching. You couldn't preach if you tried. But we want to hear your opinion," said Selby.

"Yes, yes; go on, go on," pleaded several others. The boys knew that when Hunter spoke on books he had read he would say something worth their hearing.

He was a careful reader, and had the faculty of digesting and assimilating.

"Ask Mr. Hillson," said Hunter, "about Farrar's work. He will talk to you about it much better than I can. I'm no prig."

"Which the prefect is, then, by inference," slyly put in Claude Winters.

"Look here, young fellow, youngsters should be seen and not heard in the presence of their elders," said Hunter playfully, as he suddenly rolled over on the grass and made a grab for Winters's arm. The latter was too quick, so that Howard found himself clutching a bunch of tall grass instead.

"I beg my elder's pardon," laughed Winters from a safe distance, "and trust he is not developing a Nabuchodonosor taste for grass."

"Stop your bantering, you young bantam," said Clavering, "and, Howard, give us your views on 'Eric Williams.'"

"I don't see what good my opinions will do," said Howard, "but if you must have my impressions on this book, they are something like this. To me Eric is the saddest boys' book that I know. Eric is to be good, become good and keep good, by the 'natural process.' The odds are against him. Fate, or chance, or whatever you like to call it, throws him in certain circumstances, and he goes more or less wrong; then more circumstances arise and he goes more deeply wrong, and all along the author appears to engulf him in a species of fatalism from which there is no extrication, always excepting the natural effort to do right, and this by itself is plainly shown to be inadequate."

"But conscience is always reproving Eric," said Tom Ames, who was an interested listener.

"True, but who does not know that without the aid of grace, conscience alone is not sufficient?"

"You're right, Howard," remarked Stapleton, "and according to the author, Eric's position is irretrievable, and the sins he commits are not repented of, but merely forgotten. His Christianity is but a vague generality."

"It certainly is, as we understand Christianity," continued Hunter. "The boys in that book never pray, except Russell, when he was dying, and that appears to be very vapid."

"But, Howard, you wouldn't have schoolboys praying-machines, would you?" asked Ames.

"Machines! no," was the rather warm reply; "but I would have boys in books represented as they are in life, and I claim that all boys that I have known do pray in their trials and troubles."

"Yes; that's true," said Stapleton; "look what a different fellow—what a changed character Jones is since his accident."

"I mean more than that," continued Hunter; "I claim that Catholic boys pray habitually, and then, of course, they have the sacraments as well, without which theirs would be a scant Christianity."

"Yes, boys pray," continued the other; "when you were so ill after that silly affair at the haunted mill I know for certain that the boys prayed long and earnestly for your recovery, and many holy communions were made for that end. Why! nearly the whole school made a novena for you."

A soft light came into Howard Hunter's eyes as he

learned of this. This was the first time he had heard of the charity of his schoolmates.

"I did not know this before, but knowing you fellows as I do I might have guessed such a thing. I thank you very much."

"Not at all," said Stapleton, blushing awkwardly, as all ingenuous spirits do when found out in a good action, or when they have inadvertently mentioned something to their own credit.

"Yes," continued Hunter; "Catholic boys do pray, and are not ashamed of it. It forms part of their lives."

"I think," said Stapleton seriously, "that boys in Catholic colleges, like St. Cuthbert's here, with morning and evening public prayers, the daily Mass, frequent confession and communion and the example of our priests and professors—I think that if such boys do not pray, then no boys on earth pray. Do you remember that terrible wind storm last April, when there was danger that some of the college buildings would be blown down, how at every flash of lightning or crash of thunder the boys crossed themselves again and again. Nor were they ashamed to do so, large or small. It was a manly and open acknowledgment of their dependence on a higher power."

This speech was a revelation of Stapleton's earnest character to the others. They had never heard him express himself so earnestly or so openly before, nor did the majority of his companions think him capable of such genuine feeling. It is needless to say that he rose in the estimation of his companions.

"Then your conclusion is that we, with all our advantages here, should all be priests or religious," said Tom Ames.

"By no means," replied Stapleton; "I, for one, have no inclination in that direction. The sanctity required, and the awful responsibilities to be incurred, prevent me from aspiring to such an honor. But I do claim that each one of us is bound to have an earnest purpose in life. At present I have no definite idea what I shall be, but this I am determined to be—an earnest man."

"I agree with you, Frank," observed Hunter. "It seems to me that there are a dozen careers open to us, in every one of which we can, if we wish, do yeoman service for religion without entering the actual service of the Church."

"What!" exclaimed Ames. "Howard, don't you intend to be a priest? Everybody expects you will be one."

"I am very much like Stapleton," answered Hunter; "I have not made up my mind. In the meantime I and you—all of us—have merely to do our duty now here where we are placed, and as Frank says, be men of earnest purpose."

To those who do not understand the American Catholic boy, this may sound a somewhat strange conversation. Their ideas may have been crude, but no one will charge them with lacking earnest conviction. These boys were close friends, and spoke to one another freely. The conversation was a little above the calibre of Claude Winters, who, not being much interested, could not keep still. During Howard's speech he had taken a long spear of grass, and getting behind him, began tickling his ear with it. Not perceiving the cause of the irritation, and thinking it was an insect, Hunter several times attempted to brush it away. At length, however, he caught the culprit in the act, and

in a minute the two were rolling promiscuously down the sloping bank where the group had been sitting, amid the shouts of the others. Howard tried hard to make his tormentor eat the grass that youngster had in his hand.

"What on earth causes that cloud of dust!" said Selby, as he looked down the long, dusty road. Hunter and Winters at once ceased hostilities. All rose to their feet and looked in the direction of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

WILL SHE DIE?

THE boys eagerly watched the approaching cloud of white dust, but as a tall hedge and a bend in the road obstructed their view, they could not discover its cause.

"It looks as if a company of artillery were approaching on the run," said one.

"Not enough dust," said another, "and it moves too rapidly for that."

"Whatever it be," said Hunter, "we shall learn as soon as it turns the road."

There was a good half-mile stretch from the bend in the road to where the boys were standing.

"Great heavens! it's a runaway," exclaimed one, "and only one person—a woman—in the carriage."

All the boys at once ran to the road. They saw ap-

proaching a splendid span of blacks, frantic and fiery in their unmanageableness. Even in the distance they could see the white flecks of foam on the breasts of the horses. Both had taken the bit between their teeth and were dashing along at a fearful rate. In the high seat of the dog-cart sat a young girl, about fifteen years old, holding the lines and pulling with all her slender might. Her limited strength and weak wrists were completely unable to hold the maddened horses in check. Her hat had blown off. Her long hair floated in the wind. Her teeth were tightly closed, her face deadly pale. For an instant Hunter likened her to an approaching avenging fury. All were impressed by her perilous position. Hunter and Stapleton saw also another danger. Almost immediately in front of the college buildings the road made a sudden turn at right angles, ran in that direction for a distance of about two hundred yards and then turned again at right angles in the opposite direction. It was what is commonly called by country people a "jog" in the road. Both the boys realized that the runaway team, at the rate of speed it was approaching, would not be able to turn the first corner safely. If such a feat were accomplished the second turn must prove disastrous and, perhaps, fatal to the frightened occupant of the vehicle. The girl was fast losing her nerve and courage.

"What's to be done?" said Stapleton hurriedly to Hunter.

"We must stop those horses, or she'll be killed."

"How?" asked Frank.

"You and I must catch their heads as they pass us. Will you risk it?"

"Yes," said Stapleton, firmly; "with you."

"All right. But don't attempt it as they pass, but run by their side a little—sprint for your life, Frank—and grab the right. I'll take the left. You other fellows stand as near as you can safely and try to check the speed, but don't let the horses swerve, or you'll break that girl's neck. Now then, ready!"

These directions had been given in less than a quarter of a minute. All took positions; meanwhile the frightened horses came madly rushing on.

"Help! help! help!" screamed the frightened girl as she was borne rapidly toward them. Howard and Frank stood a little in advance of the group of boys. They had thrown off their coats and vests. Neither noticed until after the excitement was over that they had both dropped their Sunday clothes in the white dust of the road. With compressed lips and determined looks the two boys stood with elbows thrown well back, and heads high, waiting for the race.

Never had these two healthy, strong, young athletes been more glad of their strength than now. It was to be a foot race between a mad runaway team and two boys, with a life of a human being as the stake.

"Sit still; don't move!" shouted Clavering to the frightened girl. The other boys gesticulated wildly in their endeavor to at least check the speed of the horses. That would be something gained. They succeeded in checking the panting, quivering animals for a moment. At that instant Howard shouted, "Go!" and he and Stapleton started on a keen run, one on each side of the horses.

The young lady, either from fright or exhaustion, now dropped the lines, and held on to the iron guard of the seat. The horses, after the momentary check,

and feeling all restraint removed, rushed on more madly than before. For a moment the horses distanced the two runners. They were not the boys to give up. Putting forth all their powers for an extra spurt, they began to gain. Each horse saw some one beside him, and began crowding the pole of the carriage. This was another gain for the boys, as the horses once more slackened speed a little. Neither of the boys could see the other. Each watched his own horse. One more spurt and both boys were at the horses' heads.

Almost simultaneously the two made a grab for the bridle line. The horses plunged violently. The girl screamed and shrieked anew, but Howard and Stapleton held on. Clear heads and trained muscles would win. More than once one or the other was lifted from his feet. Would they stop the horses before they reached the abrupt bend of the road? If this couldn't be done, the young lady would most probably be thrown out and killed. The galloping horses were becoming breathless. The boys were in good form, and neither wind nor muscle failed them. Finally they succeeded in getting the horses' heads down, and had the satisfaction of seeing the quivering, foam-flecked, but beautiful creatures come to a standstill within fifteen yards of the dangerous turn in the road.

Frank and Howard stood panting and puffing, too—"like porpoises," the latter declared later in the day.

"Gently, pet; steady now; steady," and with similar words they patted and coaxed the large-eyed, trembling animals.

"All danger is over now, miss," said Howard Hunter to the frightened girl. He did not raise his

hat, although Frank said afterward that he went through the motion, for the reason that it had fallen off far up the road.

"I congratulate you," said Howard, "that you did not attempt to jump out of the carriage, for if you had done so you certainly would have been killed."

"Oh! I—I thank you—so much. My father, Major Bracebridge, will th—" and the young lady, a reaction having begun, promptly went off into a dead faint.

This turn of affairs was much more embarrassing to the schoolboys than catching wild horses. Strength of muscle, and quickness of hand and eye and physical courage in the face of danger were required in such an emergency. But in the present state of things all these good qualities were of no avail—worse than useless. The poor, frightened girl had fallen back into a safe position while fainting.

"Here's a how-de-do!" said Stapleton, as he wiped the dust and sweat from his face, and broke into a hearty laugh. "Isn't it a tame ending after all? What a pity the fair damsel didn't break her neck and all that!"

"Frank!" said Hunter.

"Yes; wasn't it a pity she wasn't spilled, and had her cervical vertebrae severed, or something of that sort. This is all so horribly unromantic and—dusty," and he spat out a mouthful of fine dust.

"Frank!" repeated Howard, who really thought Stapleton was in earnest. The bantering tone, however, was assumed to hide his anxiety, for Stapleton had never seen anybody in a faint before. He was, in fact, quite frightened, and thought the girl would die then and there.

"Yes," he continued; "she might just as well have broken her neck while she was about it; but, say, Howard, is there any real danger, you know? Hasn't she been a long time in that faint?"

"No; less than a minute," replied Howard, laughing at Stapleton's inconsistency of words and real sentiments, "but what shall we do? She must be revived, and these horses are so restive now that they may break away at any minute."

"I have it," said Stapleton. "I will hold both horses. Go down into that ditch and bring my cap full of water and we'll dash it in her face."

Frank had on a bicycle cap. Hunter laughed. "Your cap will hold as much water as a sieve," he remarked. The difficulty was solved by the other boys running up at the moment.

"Here, Clavering," said Hunter, "hold the horses' heads, and Winters, my little man, I'll trouble you for the loan of your stiff hat, to dip up some water for this young lady."

"But she can't drink that stuff," objected Winters, unwilling, if it could be avoided, to put his Sunday hat to such base uses.

"Goose! don't you see she has gone off in a faint. I want the water in lieu of eau de cologne."

"Oh!" said Winters, as he looked at the carriage seat, and he also for the first time saw that mysterious counterfeit of death.

It was a decidedly humorous sight to see the operations of the impromptu nurses acting in an emergency. The water obtained was not plentiful in quantity, but this deficiency was amply compensated for by the abundance of foreign matter it held in solution. The

first application made the girl's pale face resemble an Alaskan squaw's after a winter's sojourn in a snow hut, and the second and third applications were not calculated to improve appearances. The results on her white dress—well, our pen is not equal to the task of describing the effect of mud water on white, starched muslin.

The reader must not judge our hero and his friends too severely on this occasion. Neither Howard nor the others had any pretension to being trained nurses, and, after all, who of us knows the most correct thing to do in cases of sudden emergency, and if we know theoretically do we apply our knowledge practically?

After about ten minutes—the boys thought it an hour—the poor girl's eyelids began to flutter, and she showed signs of returning consciousness.

"Oh! she lives," shouted Frank Stapleton in great excitement; "see, she's going to open her eyes. My! I thought she was going to kick the—I mean—I—I thought she was going to die."

"No danger of that," answered Howard; "it's just an ordinary faint. She'll be all right in a few minutes. But I wish some one would come, though," he added anxiously.

His anxiety was relieved very soon, for just at that moment Major Bracebridge rushed up.

"Is she dead? Is my Rose dead?" he asked tremblingly.

"Oh! no, sir," answered Tom Ames; "she isn't hurt. She just fainted from fright."

"Thank God!" said the Major fervently. "Oh! if I had lost my Rose! My God! I can't bear to think of it!"

The boys stood awkwardly silent at the father's strong emotion, which was deeper and stronger than their partially formed characters and early years permitted them fully to comprehend.

"But which one among you saved her? Who among you boys was brave enough to stop that run-away team?" He cast his eyes around the group.

"Frank there, sir, really stopped them," said Howard Hunter, anxious that his friend should get the credit of it all.

"Oh, Howard! how can you say that? He did it, sir. It was Howard who did it." Stapleton appeared equally anxious that the credit of the really brave action should go to Howard.

"Both disclaiming a brave deed, eh!" said the Major. There was certainly a very pleased look on his face. Turning to the other boys, he said:

"Boys, which of these two stopped my horses?"

"They both did, sir. Each ran on one side till they caught up," was the response.

"You are good boys," said the gentleman, "and modest as well as brave. You shall hear from me again. Do you belong to the college?"

Being assured that they were students of St. Cuthbert's, he signified his intention of driving there and asking to be allowed to take his daughter to the parlor to rest awhile before returning home, adding gracefully, "for where so much courage and modesty are inculcated there can not be wanting hospitality."

CHAPTER XXIX.

A NEW VIEW.

MAJOR BRACEBRIDGE gently assisted his partially recovered daughter to the college parlor, where every care was given her. The kindly President insisted upon her taking some light refreshment, and then resting for an hour or so.

In the meantime the father told the President the whole story as far as he knew it, and spoke in admiration of the gentlemanly bearing and bravery of the boys who, he said, had undoubtedly saved his dear child from sudden death.

"Although I am a non-Catholic, sir," said Major Bracebridge, "this event has much modified my views. I now think much more kindly of your college and of your religion than I did before. I should be most delighted to be permitted to see your institution while Rose is resting. I am sure she is safe in your infirmary's hands."

The President showed the visitor through the classrooms, study halls, gymnasium, dormitories, science rooms, and finally took him to the students' chapel.

"You will excuse me, sir, or rather, Father," said Major Bracebridge, "if I ask what may seem to you some very elementary and perhaps childish questions concerning your Church and service. The fact is, I have never been at close quarters, so to speak, in a Catholic church before, and all is strange, impressive, and I may add, very beautiful."

The golden tabernacle door, the stations of the cross

upon the walls, the ever-living flame burning before the tabernacle, impressed him deeply. Very beautiful that chapel was, as many an old St. Cuthbert boy will remember. But more than the solemn beauty of the place was having its influence on the visitor. One who was possessed of every natural manly virtue and of good dispositions, but unconscious of the loss of that faith of which apostate rulers had deprived his ancestors, this naturally upright man stood for the first time in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

That which chiefly attracted his attention, and over which he lingered longest, was a large oil painting of the Sacred Heart, which hung over the main altar. A long time he stood gazing at it. His guide did not interrupt his scrutiny.

"I think I begin to see," said Major Bracebridge, after a long silence. "I have never seen anything more perfectly beautiful. More beautiful, I mean, in what it suggests, than what appears in the technical execution of the picture. I think I begin to see the secret of your religion. That picture seems to tell me it is love and zeal and—forgiveness. Am I right?"

"That is really the secret of our life," said the Reverend President of St. Cuthbert's, who made a genuflection and began to move out of the chapel. When outside, and walking around the grounds, the Major said:

"Reverend sir, I am very much surprised."

"At what, may I take the liberty of asking?" said the priest.

"At this, Father; you have shown me your college, taken me everywhere, even to your place of worship, and yet you have not said one word about religion.

You have not tried to convince me at all. I always thought all Catholics tried to convert everybody to their persuasion, and, to tell the truth, not being very well up in my own religion, I have always fought shy of Catholics."

The President smiled and bowed to his visitor. He assured him that he never forced religious beliefs on any one and no one was ever molested on account of his religious opinions at St. Cuthbert's.

"Then, if I were to send my boy here next term, you would not try to force him to become a Catholic?"

"On the contrary, I should forbid him being received into the Church should his inclinations tend that way, unless you freely granted him the permission to do so."

"Dear me! dear me! is it possible! You don't say so!"

Major Bracebridge had evidently heard something which had interested and excited him. Seeing the look of inquiry on the President's face, he said:

"What a narrow, and ever-narrowing circle of prejudices compose our lives. I have lived, Father, within ten miles of your college for years, and never before came near you. Had I come under ordinary circumstances it would have been with the full conviction of finding narrowness—I speak plainly and I know you will pardon me—a veneer of respectability, and a pretense to learning. Instead I find evidences of a broad, liberal culture, an unfeigned hospitality, and among your boys, sir, a courage and a modesty as refreshing as they are genuine."

The President bowed. There was a pleased look on his face. To praise his boys was immediately to find

the way to his heart, for it was to their benefit he had devoted the best energies of his life.

"I am afraid, sir," he replied, "that we Catholics are as much to blame as are our non-Catholic neighbors. We have a good thing in our religion, and we know it, but I think that sometimes we are guilty of the fault of exclusiveness. I hope, however, this visit of yours will not be the last one."

By this time they had returned to the parlor. Rose Bracebridge had fully recovered and was ready to go home. Her father would not go until he had once more thanked his daughter's deliverers, as he called the two boys. They were sent for. Both came and stood nervously twirling their caps, and blushing.

"I could not go, young gentlemen, without once more thanking you in my daughter's name, and in my own. (The two thought this terribly formal and shifted their weight from one foot to another). I am at a loss what to do for you both, but you shall hear from me before long."

"There is nothing to be done, sir, that we can see. We saw the danger and only did what we would have liked any one else to have done for us," said Howard.

"But your action, my dear lads, was a brave one; even an heroic one, for I assure you it was a most dangerous thing to do."

"Yes, sir," said Howard, feeling very awkward under all this praise, and not knowing what else to say.

"Now, Rose, thank these young gentlemen, and let us be going."

Rose, now completely recovered from her fright, held out her hand to Howard.

"I thank you very much for your bravery."

"Yes, miss," and Hunter made a bow that would have taken a premium for awkwardness. A school-boy is a wonderful creature. Who would believe that this lithe, graceful athlete, the strong quarter-back of the crack team, one of the best of the ball nine, in the first class for running, jumping, skating, swimming, would suddenly become so shy and almost ungainly merely because a young lady offered her hand to shake and said a few words of praise. Nor was Frank Stapleton less off his guard. He had smiled at Hunter, but his turn came. Rose offered him her hand, too, with a pretty speech. He did not even attempt to shake hands, but blurted out, "Thank you, ma'am," and, of course, the next minute could have bitten his tongue off.

This was too much for the young lady, who had by this time regained her usual spirits. In spite of etiquette, in spite of everything, her merry peal of inoffensive laughter sounded through the room. Frank blushed a deeper red than he had ever done in his life.

"Phew!" he exclaimed as soon as he had reached the college yard. "I would rather catch another runaway team than go through that again."

"Thank you, ma'am," said Hunter, slyly. "But I have had enough of that, too."

"Yes, miss," retorted the other. This was too much for Frank. The next minute there was a foot race, with Hunter in the lead, his pursuer breathing forth threatenings.

There were warm handshakings at the gate when Major Bracebridge and his daughter were leaving, and a cordial invitation from the President to both to pay the college another visit.

"We shall be delighted to see you at our entertainments and exhibitions, Major."

"Thanks! Put me on your invitation list and I'll attend."

"Oh, by the way," said the Father, "let me beg of you not to think of compensating those boys. You couldn't do that."

"That's perfectly true, Father. I never could do that. Nothing would compensate them for saving my little Rose's life."

"Oh, Major, you are taking an unfair advantage of me. I mean that you could not induce the boys to accept anything. I know them well, and, believe me, you will fail if you attempt, and probably wound their feelings, too."

"I see the point," said Mr. Bracebridge. "I'll consult my wife and think it over. Good-bye, Father, and thank you heartily," and he drove his now gentle horses toward his home.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE INVITATION.

THE Bracebridges held several solemn family conclaves before they could arrive at any satisfactory way by which they could make a suitable recognition of the assistance rendered by Hunter and Stapleton.

"You see, mamma," said the Major at one of these—he was thoroughly in touch with his own children,

and copied their way of speaking—"these young fellows will take no pecuniary compensation. They are too high-spirited for that, and from their appearances I judge they do not need money."

"It is not probable they do, or they would hardly be students at St. Cuthbert's," said Mrs. Bracebridge.

"O, I don't think you are altogether correct there, my dear," was the reply.

"Perhaps I am not. Couldn't you buy each a watch?"

"Each has one. I saw them when we said good-bye. Dear me, I am quite at a loss what to do."

"Seeing we can not settle upon anything suitable, perhaps the best thing you could do would be to go and consult the President of the college."

Major Bracebridge accepted this advice. That afternoon he called for a second time at St. Cuthbert's. A long consultation ensued. He inquired if the President knew of any worthy poor boys who would benefit by a college training, but who were unable to meet the necessary expenses, "because if you know of any such I would like, in the interest of Hunter and Stapleton, to send two to your school, letting these two young men have the credit of doing it."

"I think, sir, that plan would not work," said the President. "You see, if Hunter and Stapleton were said to be paying for two boys here, the perfect equality among the boys would be impaired. A pernicious system of 'taking up' and of patronage might creep in. A precedent is easily established. No, sir, your kind plan will not work; at least, it is not feasible here."

"But, Father, can you not suggest something then?"

"If you wish to do something in gratitude to God for your daughter's escape, you yourself could send a boy here to school. These boys must have nothing to do with it."

"Yes, I'll do that, certainly. I shall be glad to do so. But I am really at my wits' end to know what to do for these boys and their companions. Oh! ah! yes! I have it! Splendid!"

The Reverend President looked inquiringly, amused at the buoyancy of the Major's manner.

"Now you mustn't thwart me this time, Father. My plan is this. It's just splendid. The boys don't want money, do they? No. They wouldn't take watches if they were offered? Very well. Now, I have a large house with plenty of rooms to spare. At home there is yachting, swimming, fishing, boating, everything suitable for strong, healthy lads' enjoyment. Won't you allow these two boys who stopped my horses and those who tried to do so, each to bring along one friend and come and stay one night with me? By sending for them, say early on Wednesday morning, and bringing them back at bedtime on Thursday, the party can have two days' outing, and only one day away from their books, as Thursday is their holiday, isn't it? You will grant me this favor, reverend sir, will you not?"

The priest saw that it would not only appear unkind, but would even hurt the generous and really grateful petitioner to refuse. He replied:

"It is really impossible to refuse you, Major Bracebridge, although I have a suspicion that I am acting against my better judgment. What will the parents who send their boys here to study say to me when

they learn that I have sent them off with you junketing?"

"Oh! if that's the difficulty, give me their addresses. I'll telegraph each at once."

"It is not necessary, Major," said the Father, laughing; "sufficient authority is vested in me to be able to do this."

"Then you consent?"

"Under pressure, for I can not resist your importunities."

"Thank you, thank you, Father. Now I'll drive home at once and tell my wife to get ready to receive guests. Let me see; this is Saturday. I'll send for them bright and early Wednesday morning. Tell any boy who comes in his Sunday clothes that I'll fling him body and bones into the lake. No style. No formality—these boys must enjoy themselves, and who could do that in a high, double-decker of a collar and cuffs! Ha! ha! My dear sir, we'll have a glorious time; yes, sir, glorious! glorious!"

Thus Major Bracebridge, in a warm-hearted way, chatted on, apparently as enthusiastic over the prospect as any of the boys would be.

"The President wishes to see you and Stapleton," said Mr. Hillson a day or two later. Howard looked surprised, and the two boys went to the President's room, wondering what could be the matter. He responded to the knock at the door with a hearty "Come in," and the two boys stood inside waiting for their superior to speak. He was busy at his desk and did not turn to them until he had finished two or three lines of a letter he was writing. Then he swung his office chair around and faced them.

"Well, boys, how are the studies progressing?"

"Pretty fairly, Father," replied Hunter.

"Any more knock-downs lately, Howard?"

The boy blushed but did not answer. Of course there had been none.

"And you, Frank, are you as ardent a student of Shakespeare as ever?"

"I don't quote any more, Father," said Stapleton. There was a merry twinkle in the President's eyes, and by that the boys judged that there was nothing unpleasant forthcoming.

"I have some important news for you, but I am afraid that I have been rather weak in granting a request made in your favor."

He then told them of Major Bracebridge's proposed pleasure party for them, and how each of the six were to choose one other, and thus make up a party of a dozen, and finished by saying:

"And now, try to curb your impatience until the morning, for then the Major's brake will be here for you."

Hunter had no difficulty in procuring a key of a class room from Mr. Hillson, and he, Stapleton, Selby, Winters, Clavering, and Ames soon met in committee.

"I would like to know, boys, the reason of this meeting," said Claude Winters. "I believe you fellows are hatching a conspiracy against authority!"

"You're getting awfully clever now you are in rhetoric, are you not?" remarked Tom Ames. "Look at the crowd here. Selby, Hunter, Stapleton & Co. are very probable conspirators, eh? I'll just tell you what the meeting is called for."

"What for?"

"It is to send a formal protest from the rhetoric class against further tolerance of short pants and little boys in our class. That's the reason of the meeting, little one. Isn't it, Selby?"

Claude Winters was the smallest boy that had ever attained to the dignified position of rhetorician at St. Cuthbert's, and was at that moment clad in those juvenile but extremely convenient nether garments. Small as he was, he was a manly, sturdy little fellow among his bigger class-mates, his fleetness often saving him from the effects of the sharpness of his tongue. Just now he seized Ames' arm and began showering thereon a succession of by no means light blows.

"It might be, for aught I know," responded Selby. "I'm totally in the dark as yet."

Stapleton reduced the noisy gathering to a semblance of order, and then informed the boys of the generous invitation of Major Bracebridge. Were ever boys so astonished! Were ever boys so delighted! What visions of pleasure floated before their vivid imaginations. Wasn't the Major a—well, they could not find adequate words to express their appreciation. What fun they anticipated—and for two whole days! How they longed for to-morrow to come. Claude Winters literally danced around the room in an ecstasy of delight. Suddenly he struck an attitude.

"Oh! I say, fellows, how can I possibly go? How can I meet that young lady again, after throwing mud on her and making her look like a—like a Fiji?"

"Well, little boy," said Frank Stapleton, with mock gravity, "we will all beg the princess not to give you a whipping, nor to stand you in the corner."

"But, seriously, can I go?"

"Go! of course you can. Do you think she knew anything about it, and she in a dead faint all the time?"

"But she found it out afterward."

"That you were the perpetrator, rather than anybody else?"

"No. I don't suppose she knows who did it."

"Well, then. Come, gentlemen, the youngster is taking up too much of our time. Whom shall we invite? We are six, so each can invite one. Howard has the first choice, of course."

"I shall ask Rob Jones," said Howard.

"Osborne is my choice," said Stapleton.

Selby chose Roy Henning, a quiet, gentle boy, because he did not appear to have many friends at college. Clavering asked Falvey. Ames said he would invite Nash, and Winters declared he would not be happy unless Clarence Alvero came with them. Selby noticed with pleasure that it was very nearly the same gathering which had met at his father's villa in Wisconsin the previous vacation, and it suddenly occurred to him that he could now carry out a certain project which he had been prevented from doing then.

And so all the preliminaries for the great event were arranged. That evening, at studies, the study-keeper noticed an unwonted restlessness among some of the usually most assiduous boys, but the prefect, Mr. Hillson, who had already been let into the secret of the forthcoming expedition, explained it all, and thus prevented a catastrophe.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HOW THE BOYS ENJOYED THEMSELVES.

WAS there ever a happier round dozen of school-boys than those who tumbled into Major Bracebridge's large family brake on that early Wednesday morning! Everybody was bubbling over with fun and frolic. Mr. Hillson, Father Lovelace, the prefect of studies, and the kindly old President stood on the front steps to see them off.

"I need not remind you, boys," said the latter, "that you are guests at a gentleman's house, and that the honor and credit of St. Cuthbert's are in your hands."

"Never fear, Father, we are St. Cuthbert's boys first, last, and all the time," shouted one of the party.

"Good-bye, boys, and a pleasant time."

"Good-bye, Father, good-bye all," they shouted. "Three cheers for the President!" shouted the irrepressible Claude, as the big carry-all began its ten-mile journey. The cheers were given with a will—and a tiger. The brake was drawn by the same splendid black team whose mad racing had been the occasion which had gained for them the outing.

A perfect summer sky, with a pleasant early morning breeze, enhanced the pleasure of the ride. These, and the rapid motion of the vehicle, acted like new wine on the already jubilant spirits of the boys. All nature was at its best. The June foliage, freshened by a sharp shower during the night, which had laid every particle of dust; the abundance of blossoms in every field and hedge row; and anticipated pleasures, made

all eyes sparkle and all hearts beat the quicker. The boys had never been more than three or four miles in the direction of Rosecroft, therefore a large part of the road was new to them and consequently the more enjoyable. Human beings delight in a change of scene. These healthy, hearty, and spirited boys took in a full measure of delight on this journey. Quips and cracks and jokes flew thick and fast. But, withal, there was nothing improper, nothing that would have made their sisters or mothers blush had they heard. The angels could have laughed at their innocent fun.

Thank God such boys exist, and thank God again that our country is fairly dotted over with institutions which yearly send out into the world such characters as these, to elevate and brighten our commercial, professional, and domestic life.

At length the brake reached Rosecroft. The great iron gates flew open as they approached, and the boys, sobered for the nonce, were bowled along a noble avenue of beeches which touched overhead. Rosecroft had been well named, and especially so for the month of June. Roses were everywhere, of every shade and color, and just now in the full magnificence of bloom. Our boys had never seen anything more beautiful. The house was a large mansion of light granite, built after the style of the old English manor house of a century ago. The grand front was almost completely covered to the eaves with luxuriant ampelopsis, or Boston ivy, and climbing roses. In an elevated position on a small plateau of about five acres, the manor house was visible for miles. On the sides of the hill had been made a beautifully curving broad walk, and the banks and lawns were diversified

by a large variety of trees, carpet beds of flowers, masses of geraniums and yuccas, and roses everywhere. Here and there were shady summer houses. A large, natural grotto graced one position of the grounds, but everywhere, in every available position, grew rose bushes, covered just now with their floral wealth of blossom. At the foot of the hill in front of the house, glittered and rippled in the morning sun a pretty lake of half a mile in width, and away between the hills another was visible.

Before alighting from the brake, Stapleton, who had caught sight of Rose Bracebridge, whispered to Winters:

"Say, Claude, she has no traces of mud on her face. At all events you haven't disfigured her for life," and Frank received for his pains a grip on the arm from the sturdy little fellow he was teasing, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have forced him to sue for mercy.

"Welcome, young gentlemen, heartily welcome to Rosecroft Manor," said Major Bracebridge, as the boys alighted; "let me introduce you to my wife and family."

Stapleton and Hunter felt their hands growing unaccountably large again. Each determined to make no silly replies as before. Major Bracebridge cut short all formality by saying:

"Oh, mamma! here's a pretty pickle! I can't introduce anybody to you, for I know the names of none except Master Hunter and his friend, Master Stapleton."

The motherly instinct of the good lady, who came forward smiling to greet them, saw that any cere-

mony would destroy her visitors' pleasure, so she said:

"It is not necessary, dear; these young gentlemen are students of St. Cuthbert's. I am only too pleased to welcome them all."

"That's capital! So now, boys, if you don't enjoy yourselves for the next two days, all I can say is that it will be your own fault. I'm going to be a boy with you. Is lunch ready, mamma?"

Of course it was ready, and the boys thought they had never seen such a lunch. It is better not to describe it lest those who were not present might become envious or incredulous. It was just such a lunch as any boy who had been a whole year at school might dream of.

By the time coffee was finished all shyness had vanished. The visitors had made the acquaintance of the Major's son Ambrose, and all mentally voted him a good fellow. They thought he would be an acquisition to St. Cuthbert's, and boys rarely err in their intuitions.

"Now, while daylight lasts," said the Major, as soon as lunch was over, "I do not propose to keep you indoors. I won't show you the grounds. You can see them for yourselves at your leisure. The naphtha launch is now ready. Who would like to go for a cruise?"

Of course all were anxious to go.

"All right. Ambrose, tell James to whistle when he is ready for us, and tell him not to forget the hamper. Good-bye, mamma. We will be home by six o'clock for dinner, and won't we be hungry, eh, boys? Come along, lads, let's be off!"

While on the dock awaiting to embark, Frank Stapleton said to Major Bracebridge:

"Claude here, is anxious to know if there is any mud in the lake."

"Oh! Frank, don't," said Claude, hanging back a little.

"Why no," replied the Major; "there is no mud here. Rose Lake and the other over there between the hills are as clear as crystal. You can see the bottom at forty feet and deeper in many places. But why do you ask?"

"Because, sir, Claude has been dealing in mud lately."

"Dealing in mud! What does this big fellow mean, little man?"

"Oh! sir, make him stop," said Claude.

The boys' host looked from one to the other in a puzzled way.

"He was the artist," continued the tease, "who ornamented Miss Bracebridge's face with yellow mud when she fainted."

"Oh, ho! that's the joke, is it!" replied the good-natured Major. "Well, my lad, let me tell you that I would have done the same thing if I had been there, and remember, Stapleton, the joke's not all on your side, thank you, ma'am."

Claude shook his fist at Frank, and begged the Major to tell him.

"I will, Claude, if he ever mentions yellow mud to you again."

Stapleton was fairly caught and he admitted it.

The little launch plowed gaily through the limpid water, hardly leaving a ripple in its wake. More

than one of the boys leaned far out over the bow, looking down into the water at the wonderful vegetation on the lake bed, now and again catching a glimpse of a good-sized fish which darted away, doubtless frightened by the hull of the steamer looming above it. Steep and in many places precipitous banks girdled Lake Rose. These slopes were thickly wooded, with here and there large rocks breaking through the sides of the banks to lend variety. There were occasional breaks in the rugged scenery, and through miniature cañons the excursionists once in awhile caught glimpses of the beautiful country beyond.

"Oh, look! What a beautiful ruin!" shouted Rob Jones, as the boat emerged from a narrow channel into the second lake. On the right bank stood the crumbling walls of what had once been a very substantial but small stone house, built of "hard heads" or unbroken round stones taken from the lake. Every particle of woodwork had long since disappeared. The roofless walls were covered with ivy. From the water level the voyagers could see the blue sky through the windows and other apertures in the walls which time had made.

"Take a good look," said Major Bracebridge, "and as we steam across this lake to a celebrated spring at the other end I will tell you the story of that ruin. I think it will interest you."

The genial host, before he had retired from the army upon inheriting his father's large fortune, had been accounted a good raconteur at the mess table. Although his increasing years had somewhat silvered his hair and deepened the crows' feet around his eyes, they had not frosted his heart or diminished his story-

telling powers. Now he had an interested audience of young, eager listeners.

"A story! Whoop! Hurrah!" they shouted. Crowding around the Major they wanted the story and wanted it at once.

"There was once a time," he began, "which was so long ago that if we had been living then we should not be alive now—"

"Te-he! he! he! he!" giggled Claude.

"What's the matter now, you young sunbeam?" exclaimed the story-teller, pretending to look severely at the boy.

"That's such a funny way of putting it, sir," said Claude, half abashed at his own interruption.

"But wasn't my statement true?"

"That all depends upon how long ago the time was."

"Look here, Claude," said Jones, "you just stop that. Can't you see you're stopping the story."

"I'll stand guard over him, Major Bracebridge, and if he interrupts again we will throw him overboard and make him swim home," said Hunter.

"Go on, sir; we're all listening," eagerly exclaimed Stapleton.

"Well, will 'once upon a time' suit you?" asked the narrator.

"Yes, sir; that's the proper way to begin," replied Claude, in spite of Howard's threatening attitude.

"All right, then. 'Once upon a time,'" began the Major. But as the story is a rather long one we will commence a new chapter with it.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE MAJOR'S STORY.

"ONCE upon a time," began Major Bracebridge, "the Indians were the only inhabitants of this region. When the white people began to come in the Indians thought them inhabitants of another world. They soon found, however, to their cost, that they were human, and very human at that. My great-grandfather was among the first settlers. It was he who built that house which is now in ruins. He had two sons and a daughter, Blanche. It is around her that the story of fighting and romance centers."

"Oh! an Indian battle," said one of the listeners, and they crowded closer together not to lose a syllable.

"It is not a story of open Indian warfare," said the Major, "but rather a story of Indian cunning and superstition. My ancestor was kind to the Indians. He never refused any of them food in the winter when they came to the house to ask for it, and they came frequently. Had his neighbors acted in a similar way this story would probably never have been told.

"Of course, in the early days there were no fine roads. Each settler had his own clearing. The road from one house to another was merely a blazed trail in the forest.

"Blanche would frequently mount her little pony and ride off through the woods to spend a day at a neighbor's. Her mother and brothers frequently cautioned her of the risk she ran in these journeys. She

laughed at their fears. A splendid horsewoman and a good shot—she often practised rifle-shooting with her brothers—she felt as safe and as much at home in the limitless forest, as at her spinning-wheel by the kitchen fire.

“Now, at the head of this lake, at the spring, was a collection of Indian tepees where dwelt Wash-te-naw, the medicine man of the tribe, and Pamseck, the chief, with his son, White Deer. Pamseck had seen, with bitter anger, the advent of the white men, who had driven away all the game by the sound of their axes, and by teaching his tribesmen to speak English and many of the ways of civilization, had gradually undermined his authority. He bore my respected ancestor particular hatred, for he considered him the chief of the palefaces. With respect to the latter opinion, Pamseck was correct. My great-grandfather was the wealthiest of the immigrants, and in time became justice of the peace. Wash-te-naw also saw his influence decline. Thus actuated by similar sinister motives these two set to work to turn the redskins against the settlers.

“White Deer acquiesced in their schemes, but from a different policy. This young warrior had often seen Blanche riding through the forest, gaily warbling some song or imitating the birds in their melody. When he saw her approach he would plunge into the depths of the forest and pluck the reddest and tallest foxgloves, or the sweetest bergamot. Then, reappearing far ahead, he would await her approach and offer her the flowers. Blanche would always accept them, giving a smile and words of thanks. Should these presentations happen to take place on her home-

ward way, she would show her brothers the floral trophies, saying:

“‘See what my Indian cavalier gave me to-day. When did my brothers ever act so gallantly?’

“The men attached no importance to this affair. They had other things to think about. They were anxious about the growing animosity of the Indians. Yet it never entered the head of any of the Bracebridge family that it was against them especially that the hatred of the Indians was directed.

“White Doe, sister of White Deer, lived with Blanche as her maid. Frequently questioned by the brothers as to the intentions of Pamseck, her father, and the medicine man, she would answer nothing but:

“‘White Deer love white people. White Doe love white people. Me tell soon.’

“Blanche was riding one day, as usual, in the forest, singing in the gladness of her heart. Suddenly White Deer appeared before her with some tall foxgloves in his hand. She accepted them with her customary smile and words of thanks, but a moment later she saw there was something unusual in his behavior. He was excited. He had something to say. The girl did not know many Indian words, nor did White Deer possess a large vocabulary of English. But she at length made out that the young Indian was making ardent love to her, asking her to leave her father's house and become the red man's wife.

“At length the incongruity of the situation broke in upon her, and, although she should not have done it, peal on peal of merry laughter from her laughter-loving lips echoed through the leafy arches of the

forest. Had Blanche, with as many Indian words as she knew, quietly rejected his suit, the tragic events which followed might not have ensued. By the tone of the laughter the young buck learned that he had been rejected. With angry face and lowering brow he darted into the woods. Blanche returned home at once. Her father looked very grave when she told him what had happened, and how she had acted. He knew more of Indian nature by this time than she.

"White Deer went to his wigwam and brooded. At night he went to Wash-te-naw and told him the result of his wooing, asking the medicine man for a charm by which to win the White Rose, as he called Blanche. The crafty man of incantations saw his opportunity to gain over White Deer to his plans, for hitherto the young Indian had held himself aloof from the council fires, and knew little of what was in progress.

"Wash-te-naw told White Deer that the great Manitou would be propitious to him in his suit and gain for him the White Rose under the condition that his first arrow should be stained with the life blood of her father or one of her brothers. This act alone would cause her to return love for love.

"The young man was not anxious for bloodshed, but being madly enamored of the charms of Blanche, he fell into the trap. When he accepted the condition he was told of the proposed plan of extermination of the palefaces, and that the attack was to be made that night on the Bracebridge home.

"Long and seriously the father and two sons discussed the situation. The more they talked it over, the more alarmed they became. They were sure that Blanche's refusal would bring matters to a crisis.

“‘At all events, it is well to be prepared for the worst,’ said my great-grandfather, and they set about cleaning their firearms. White Doe was closely questioned. She appeared to know nothing of the intentions of her tribe. All were agreed that she was sincerely attached to Blanche, who all the time laughed at the fears of the men, assuring them that there could be no possible danger. Little did this poor girl dream that she had taken her last ride in the flower-strewn forest glades; that never more would she take these flowers from her dusky admirer, or compete with the wooded songsters in their rapturous melody at sunrise.

“Old John Bracebridge sent the women to rest, or at least upstairs to their rooms for the night. The three men waited hour after hour through the dark, moonless night, fearing they knew not what. About two o’clock the watchers heard the shrill hoot of an owl, and then another and another. The air seemed to be full of owl calls.

“‘There is a tremendous lot of owls outside to-night,’ said the younger brother, Ambrose, in a whisper. ‘I think I’ll go out for a moment and get a breath of fresh air.’

“The father, in the fitful glare of the fast dying log fire, shook his head in disapproval, but the young man did not see it. He went to the door and threw it wide open.

“This was the Indians’ chance. They had waited for hours for some movement of this kind. Instantly four of them made a rush into the room. Quickly the guns were seized and fired. White Deer was shot dead on the threshold. A hand-to-hand fight ensued. Hearing the report of the guns, Blanche came down,

stairs. Hardly had she entered the room than with a piercing cry she fell prone on the floor. A poisoned arrow had pierced her heart. A desperate struggle ensued. Wash-te-naw and Pamseck were badly wounded, and taken captive.

"Thus the White Deer and the White Rose met their death in the house whose ruins you just now saw. There are a few Indians, descendants of these, in this neighborhood now, but when the wind whistles down the ravine these say, 'It is White Deer moaning for his lost bride'; when the lake is tossed into white-caps they say, 'The spirit of White Deer is gathering the white foxgloves for his White Rose'; and when the lake is calm and smiling, as it is now, they will tell you that 'White Deer has now found his bride.'"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE ATTACK.

THE passengers on the naphtha launch were all deeply interested in Major Bracebridge's story, which he probably improvised for their entertainment. He was plied with questions. Why did Blanche come down-stairs just at that moment? Which of the two brothers killed White Deer? What became of Pamseck and the Medicine Man? etc., etc., so that, to his amusement, he had in self-defense to turn their thoughts in another direction.

"Dear me! We have actually forgotten that there

is a hamper of good things on board. Here, James, I'll take the wheel while you cut the strings."

Mrs. Bracebridge had filled the large basket with fruits, cakes, and candies, to which ample justice was done by the voyagers.

During this light meal Ambrose Bracebridge, Selby, and Falvey had separated themselves from the rest of the party. In the rear of the boat they put their heads together in deep confabulation, which lasted some time, until called upon by Major Bracebridge to come and assist in swelling a boating song chorus.

Merrily the care-free schoolboys made the hills re-echo with their songs and happy shouts. Every spot of interest or beauty in the two lakes was visited and praised or criticised. It was a happy day for all. To have a "breathing spell" in the school year before the repetitions for the final examinations commenced, was keenly appreciated by all. And, thought the boys, more than once that day, such a generous recompense for merely stopping a runaway team! The spontaneity of their welcome by their host and hostess added a keen zest to their enjoyment. Their pleasure was enhanced by learning that Ambrose Bracebridge was to be an inmate of St. Cuthbert's the following year.

Six o'clock came, and with it dinner. Were the boys hungry? Please tell me when boys are not? The writer of these truthful memoirs of old St. Cuthbert's frankly confesses he is unable to do justice on paper to that dinner. Jones and Winters agreed that the college feasts on the great festivals of the Church or the national holidays, paled into insignificance by comparison. Stapleton was sure, as he afterward con-

fidently told Mr. Hillson, that Lucullus never sat down to anything more splendid, and was surprised at the prefect's incredulous smile.

The kind and motherly lady of Bracebridge Manor knew how to cater successfully to strong, healthy, growing boys. There was much less reserve and shyness at the dinner than there had been at the luncheon. Before the meal was over every one felt as if he had known his hostess all his life, and each was secretly complimenting her by tracing in her some resemblance to his own mother. All felt the charm of good breeding that pervaded the manor, though, perhaps, not one could have defined it.

The irrepressible and sunshiny nature of Claude Winters was seen at its best. During the dinner he fairly scintillated with fun and humor. Frank seemed to be the butt of Claude's quips, and he had to be mysteriously warned by Major Bracebridge to keep clear of the yellow mud incident when retaliating. Hunter's reading was brought into requisition. He illustrated many a story by an apt quotation from the poets. Stapleton's penchant for quoting from Shakespeare, which, since the illness of Howard Hunter had been suppressed rather than relinquished, re-blossomed in all its pristine splendor.

Mrs. Bracebridge and her daughter were delighted with the success of their dinner—delighted in that success which lies beyond the triumph of well-cooked and well-served dishes. It was a case where, for once, a dinner party had attained at least one object of its institution, which is, as some wise men say, to give an occasion for the exchange of the mutual courtesies of life and to promote fine fellowship. But then, dear

madam, these boys were not blasé, and it is doubtful if any of them could have defined the word "ennui"; certainly none could have done so from personal experience.

After the dinner, all went on to the lawn, where they witnessed a display of fireworks, which were lighted from a raft moored some distance out in the lake. The grand finale of the pyrotechnic display was an illumination of a small island situated about two hundred yards from the shore.

Helen Island was named after the wife of the owner of Rosecroft Manor. It was the crowning glory of the beautiful grounds. Three primeval rock pines reared their lofty heads from the center of the island, resembling three gigantic plumes. Below them nestled trees in great variety. The ground was in its wild state, making a pleasing contrast to the carefully kept lawns on the mainland. Willow and larch and beech fringed the edge of the island and dipped their trembling leaves into the murmuring waters below.

At a given signal red lights were burned all over the island. The boys stood in silent admiration at the beautiful effect.

"Oh! look at that beautiful tent in the middle of the island," exclaimed Jones; "it looks as if it were made of pink silk, by this red light."

"Yes, and that reminds me," said Major Bracebridge, "although we have plenty of rooms in the house for all of you, gentlemen, yet those who wish may sleep in that tent on the island. It is supplied with plenty of cots. On hot nights we frequently spend the night there. I leave it entirely to each one's choice."

The visitors were delighted at the opportunity of "camping out," even for one night only. There were some exceptions, however. Roy Henning preferred to sleep in the house. Selby, Ambrose Bracebridge, and Falvey telegraphed eye-signals to one another, and cautiously, one by one, declined the invitation. The others were surprised at their decision. Winters declared the dinner coffee had gone to their heads. Preparations were at once made to row the campers to the island landing-dock.

"Have you secured the colored blankets?" asked Selby of Ambrose a little later.

"Yes, and I have had James make three feather head-dresses, in one of which he has fixed a pair of small antlers from the library. It looks immense!"

"Good! That will do for the ghost of the Indian White Deer. If we had only brought some 'make-up' paints with us."

"I have some grease paints," said Ambrose. "We use them in private charades sometimes."

"Shall we take Henning into our scheme?" asked Falvey.

"No. He doesn't seem strong. It is better for him to take a good sleep."

"But it will be three to nine."

"No matter. If they attack us—that is, if they should turn the tables—we can run for it."

"When shall we go over?" asked Selby.

"After father has gone to bed. These fellows over in the tent will laugh and talk for a long time yet. They won't sleep for at least an hour."

Many a laugh, many a snatch of song, many a shout in the mere exuberance of good spirits went rippling

over the still waters of Rose Lake as the embarking party passed the shallow channel to the island.

"Good-night! Good-night; sweet repose!" shouted Mrs. Bracebridge.

"Sleep soundly, boys!" also shouted Mr. Bracebridge, "and be ready in the morning for a day's fishing in the upper lake."

"Look out for reptiles and toads and frogs and mosquitoes and malaria and chills!" sung out Ambrose Bracebridge.

"Are all those things on the island?" called back Claude Winters.

"No, no, none of them," said the Major. "That rascal of mine is trying to fool you."

"O sir; he can't fool us! Good night, good night all."

The next moment the party on shore heard the landing party singing with all their might: "For he's a jolly good fellow, and so say all of us."

Then the family retired to the house, and to their respective rooms. The three conspirators now began to make immediate preparations. Each divested himself of all his clothing except his shoes, and put on a thick bathing suit. They then began to "make up" their faces, at which occupation we will leave them for the present, merely stating that when their artistic work was finished it is safe to say that no stage Indians ever looked more ferociously hideous, nor were there ever greater caricatures of the noble redmen of the forest. But this was not the conspirators' fault. They had the will, but did not possess the necessary skill.

The islanders enjoyed the novelty of their position immensely. They felt little inclination to retire to bed.

They talked and ~~chatted~~ freely. They aired their views on things present, past, and future, discussed the events of the school year, of the coming examination, with their hopes and fears of the results. Then their conversation turned upon their host and his family. What a kind, generous man! And Ambrose! All voted him quite jolly. Everybody was pleased that he would be at St. Cuthbert's the next year.

"I wonder," said Rob Jones, as he lay on the flat of his back on his cot, "whether the going there will result in his conversion to our faith?"

"Not unlikely," replied Hunter, "but why do you ask that question, Rob?"

"Because," replied Jones in a quiet, determined way that showed him to be made of the right material, "I intend that no bad example of mine shall be an obstacle to him."

"Good for you, old fellow!" said Hunter. "That's business."

"Yes, it's business with me. I have done enough harm since I've been at St. Cuthbert's, and I mean as long as I remain to try to undo some of it."

"And rest assured, Rob," said Hunter warmly, "that all here will help you, too."

"Thank you, fellows; I'm sure you will."

All were just a little touched at Jones' earnestness. There was a pause. Each was thinking.

"I've got a notion, boys," suddenly said Claude Winters, rising on one elbow, and trying to see the others in the dim light of the moon in her first quarter.

"You are full of them, my son," remarked Stapleton, "but what particular one is agitating thy cerebellum now?"

"O shut up, Frank! I'm serious."

"Wonder upon wonders! Phe-ew! Gentlemen of the jury, he's serious. Whoever would have thought it!"

"Say, Claude," said Ames, "if Stapleton doesn't soon recover, I'll endow my right hand shoe with powers of remarkably rapid locomotion for his benefit. What's your idea, little one?"

But Stapleton did not stop. He began apostrophizing the canvas roof of the tent, with arms uplifted: "He's serious, serious, serious! O ye mighty yards of army duck, listen, for he's serious!"

Winters seeing that he could not bring Stapleton just then to his senses, began to unfold his plan to Ames and Hunter, regardless of the other's nonsense.

"I think we all would like to see Ambrose become a Catholic. Now, I propose we form ourselves into a kind of society for his conversion. Suppose we all agree—there are nine of us here, and I'm sure that Selby and Falvey and Roy Henning will join in—suppose we all agree to say one decade of the rosary each every day for his conversion."

Stapleton, amid all his foolishness had been listening to what Winters had to propose. When he saw that his small friend really had a serious proposal, he at once became interested. Claude's plan was agreed to, and the "private association" was formed then and there for the benefit of the boy who at that moment was preparing a surprise for the tenters of which they little dreamed.

The suggestion of Winters had set the boys thinking, consequently much of the joking and laughing was dropped, and every one began to think about night-prayers and bed.

"To whoo! to whoo! to whi! to whoo!" sounded high up in the black branches of the giant pine under which the tent was pitched.

"What's that unearthly noise?" timidly asked Alvero.

"That's only an owl," answered Hunter, "up in the tree above us. You are not frightened, are you? Did you never hear an owl before?"

"Never so close and so loud."

"Suppose it should be the ghost of the owl that was heard when Blanche Bracebridge met her death!" said some one in the dark, intent on scaring Alvero.

"Suppose it should be the ghost of the Indian who then imitated the owl!" said Jones.

All the boys went to the door of the tent, which had not yet been closed for the night. At the moment that all were looking out into the half-darkness toward the dimly lit and spectral-looking lake, a large white owl dropped, noiselessly as a snowflake falls, from the top-most branch of the pine to right in front of the boys, and sat ghost-like and silent close in front of the company. The large, round, beautiful eyes of the wise-looking night wanderer were clearly seen by the boys. Suddenly the bird began to hoot again. Being much nearer this time, the sound was much louder. Most of the party experienced a kind of uncanny feeling.

By common consent they closed the tent door, and all began to prepare for sleep.

They had scarcely done so when some one in the darkness said, "What is that!"

"Ssh! listen!" whispered Ames. All stilled even their breathing. The listeners heard distinctly the cracking sound of dry twigs being stepped on.

"I believe it's a wild-cat on the island," said Stapleton in a whisper. He had become uneasy for Hunter. He looked at him in the gloom of the tent, and was relieved to find that he was not in the least nervous.

"Keep quiet!" remarked Howard, a moment later; "that's no wild-cat's tread. That's a man's tread. Let's peep through the tent door and see who they are."

The door had not been laced. Peering out cautiously they saw, as they thought, three Indians in war-paint and feathers, creeping toward the tent. Suddenly, however, Hunter caught sight of Selby's brown shoes.

"I have it, boys," whispered Hunter. "It's Selby and Falvey and young Bracebridge. They mean to attack and scare us. My! they are frights! Now, I'll tell you what we will do," he continued, still whispering; "let us all jump into our beds and pretend to be fast asleep. When they wake us up we must all be horribly frightened. Then at a given signal from me, all will jump out and each three—there are nine of us—will seize one man, and we will drop them all into the lake from the landing dock!"

No sooner suggested than agreed to. Every boy was under his quilt in a trice. Some even snored.

"Stop that, you fellows," whispered Frank. "You'll give us away! You'll overdo the thing."

The counter-conspirators watched in great excitement the slow approach of the enemy, whom at last they distinguished prowling around outside the tent. Presently a streak of faint light was seen, as one of the invaders opened the tent door.

"They are all asleep. Good!" said one of the three.

"Now for it. You stand at Stapleton's bed. I'll stand at Hunter's, and, Ambrose, you find out Clavering's."

Putting his hand on Stapleton's breast, Selby said in a low, guttural tone: "I am White Deer's ghost and am come to take vengeance for the death of my White Rose. Arise and come with me."

Frank Stapleton opened his eyes and feigned to be startled and to tremble.

"I am the ghost of Wash-te-naw, come to take vengeance on the white robbers of my nation," said Falvey.

"I am Pamseck, chief of my tribe—" began Ambrose.

His sentence was never finished, for Clavering, at the appointed signal, sent forth such a yell that the ghosts themselves were startled.

"Very sorry, gentlemen," said Hunter, "but ghosts or no ghosts, you are our prisoners. At them, boys!"

Then followed a battle royal. Cots were overturned. Everything in the tent was upset. In the fast and furious fun that followed it looked as if the tent pole itself would go, too. The attack was vigorous. The resistance was equally so, but the invaders soon found that they were outnumbered. They admitted they were beaten.

"We surrender!" cried the leader of the Indians; "what do you intend to do with us?"

It was now the tenters' turn.

"Silence!" commanded Hunter. Not a word was spoken.

"Fall in!" The three captive Indians were marshalled in row, with a guard on either side and one behind.

"March!" shouted Howard.

The three fours began to move out of the tent.

"Oh! we're beaten fairly enough, but what on earth are you going to do now?" asked Selby, who was quite equal to the fortunes of war.

"Captain, brain that warrior with his own tomahawk if he speaks again!" ordered the commander.

Straight to the landing pier they marched the prisoners without a word.

"Oh! they're going to take us up to the manor and show us off as prisoners of war," said Falvey. "Say, gentlemen, Major Bracebridge and all the family are in bed and fast asleep by this time."

"Silence!" again commanded the leader.

The three captives now became exceedingly curious as to what was in store for them. Howard, seeing this, whispered to Ames, who was near him. Ames then whispered to Nash. Nash turned and whispered to his nearest neighbor. In this way the whole nine of the islanders pretended to impart important information to each other, to the utmost mystification of the prisoners.

Arriving at the end of the pier, Howard Hunter turned to his comrades and with mock heroic solemnity addressed them, telling them how their hearths and homes had, this glorious night, been saved from destruction by the bloodthirsty savages who claimed they were the ghosts of Pamseck, Wash-te-naw and White Deer. He concluded by saying:

"And, now, brave citizens and braver warriors and defenders, the only way to lay forever the ghosts of these troublesome redmen is to pitch them into the lake, blankets, feathers and all. Go!"

At the given signal, each three lifted their man off his feet and neatly dropped him into the water below, amid such shouts and peals of laughter as made the hills resound again and again.

The three invaders, expecting such a turn of events, let their blankets take care of themselves. They then struck out into deep water for a cool, refreshing midnight swim.

"Come and join us," they shouted back. The campers now regretted that they had not provided themselves with swimming suits. It has never been decided which side had the best of that night attack.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FISHING.

"I AM afraid you young gentlemen who slept in the tent last night did not sleep much," said Major Bracebridge at the breakfast table the next morning.

"It seems to me," remarked the lady of the house, "that I heard them laughing and shouting long after midnight. You must have had great fun."

There was a merry twinkle in Hunter's eyes as he looked across the table at Selby and Ambrose Bracebridge. The two did not know whether Hunter was going to "give them away" as Falvey loosely expressed it.

"We talked a great deal about Indians," said Howard, "and at one time we thought we saw live Indians, but we were soon undeceived."

"By the noise you made, I thought you were taking a midnight swim," remarked their host.

"Oh! two or three did take a swim at that time," and the practical jokers looked sheepish.

"Did you not see any ghosts?" asked Rose, laughing.

"Nothing more ghostly than a large white owl, but that did not disturb us."

"Winters threw some mud at it," insinuated Stapleton, and Claude began to look uncomfortable. The Major came to the rescue by telling his visitors that he had a surprise in store for them.

At the rear of the house on the steep bank of the stream which fed Rose Lake, Mr. Bracebridge had built a chute for the amusement of his children and their companions. None of the boys had any experience in this new form of amusement. All were delighted to try it.

"Shoot the shoots! Shoot the shoots!" shouted Winters in high glee, principally in having gotten the name wrong, and secondly in gaining some new experience in the way of amusement. After breakfast all made a rush for the platform, from which the truck and flat-boat were started with their living freight on their rapid downward course to the water. It was exciting fun, with, of course, a spice of danger in it. Had there been none, the boys would soon have found it tame, but to see the boat strike the water—while its truck sunk beneath—and send forward a large sheet of water in front of it, was the greatest of fun.

Time and time again the boys made the lightning-like descent, amid the wildest shouting. The toilsome ascent to start down anew added zest to the pastime.

"Where's Roy Henning?" asked some one. "I think he would like this sport."

"I suppose he's in the house," answered Stapleton; "he's not strong, you know, and wouldn't care for this violent kind of exercise. Look out; off she goes!" and the truck was put in motion.

"Stop the truck! Look! Look!" shouted Falvey from half-way up the hill.

"Look!" screamed Hunter; "stop the car! don't you see Henning in a small boat right near the chute. Oh! he'll be killed!"

But it was too late. The truck had begun to move, and no one could stop it in its ever-accelerating speed down the steep incline.

All turned white with sudden fear, as they saw Henning's danger.

"Row, Roy, row! Row with all your might! Row! row!"

"Look out, Roy! You'll get struck!"

"Back water, Henning; back water, quick, quick!"

The slim boy in a light boat had passed around a bend in the shore in the direction of the chute, unconscious of his danger, his back being in the direction of the descending flatboat. Hearing the shouting, Roy looked up the bank, and then saw the machine coming toward him. For a moment he caught sight of the white faces of the boys in the flatboat half way down the chute, and heard the shouts from the platform. Suddenly he realized that all the shouting and commotion was for him. Then he saw his imminent danger. In an instant he bent with all his force to the oars. It was a race of perhaps fifteen feet for him to safety, against the terrific velocity with which the truck with

its boat rushed down the steeply-inclined plane. Those on the platform stood with white faces and staring eyes scarcely daring to breathe for the sudden horror of the situation.

Desperately hard did the weak boy pull to get out of the way. An instant later a curved curtain of water, caused by the impact of the flatboat with the surface of the lake, prevented the boys in the chute boat from seeing whether their descent had been fatal to their friend. The sheet of water drenched Henning and knocked him over the side of his boat into the lake. Luckily the heavy square boat did not strike the light one. In a moment Stapleton, who had made the descent, jumped into the lake and waded toward the frightened boy. In another he had him in his arms, carrying him to the bank, where he gently deposited him.

Henning, however, was not hurt. He immediately stood up and began to laugh and cry at the same time over his narrow escape. The others heaved a sigh of relief, silently thanking God that no accident, beyond a drenching, had happened to mar the pleasure of their visit to Rosecroft Manor.

After so narrow an escape from a catastrophe, the charm of "shooting the chutes" was gone. They repaired to the house at once, to begin their preparations for a fishing excursion which was to take place in the upper lake. This beautiful sheet of water was noted for the fine pickerel and bass fishing it afforded.

Roy Henning, after his fright and narrow escape, did not care to go on the fishing expedition, so he spent the rest of the day in the company of Mrs. Bracebridge, whom he learned to love. She, too, gained by

that day's intercourse. A friendship was formed between these two which lasted many years. She gained a knowledge of a really beautiful character, whose simplicity and ingenuousness charmed her, while the transparent delicacy of the boy's character was a revelation to her of what the Catholic religion can produce under favoring circumstances. More than once that day this revelation was so startling that the good and kind lady experienced a species of awe. It was all so new to her; all so wonderful.

"I don't see why I can't hook one of those fish," said Hunter, who had been sitting patiently in the sun a long time. "I have been having bites for the last ten minutes," and he once more violently jerked his line out of the water, and sent the baitless hook high into the air. "There it is again, bait gone and fish lost!"

"Fisherman's luck, that's all," remarked Claude Winters, who was sitting on the next seat in the boat, but within easy reach of Hunter's bamboo. With one finger he had again and again gently tapped the end of Howard's rod, producing precisely the same telegraphic communication to Howard's hand as would result from a bite of a fairly large-sized fish at the hook. Time and again Hunter was deceived, drawing his hook out of the water with the enthusiasm of a Walton, but with the vigor of a striker on a baseball nine, and consequently losing his minnow each time.

There was good fishing, too. The others were catching fish with a fair amount of success. Howard was sorely puzzled.

"You don't give the fish a chance, Howard," said Claude. "Let them take time to get comfortably on your hook before you pull up."

Howard waited. Tap, tap, tap, tap, went the mischievous finger.

"Look! look! Howard; your line is moving again; you have another bite. You'll hook a ten-pounder this time. Wait, now; don't be in a hurry."

Howard waited. Finally Claude gave the end of his friend's pole a harder knock than usual. Hunter was sure, this time, that he had hooked his fish, and pulled up as before, with the same result, amid the laughter of the others. He was completely mystified.

Emboldened by his success, Winters ventured his practical joke on the Major, also. Now, this gentleman was an old fisherman, and far too experienced to be taken in by such methods. At once he detected the ruse. He rearranged positions, putting Claude in the bow of the boat, sending Howard to the stern, and he himself remaining in the middle. This arrangement caused Howard to have a less number of "bites" but more fish. Major Bracebridge did not tell Howard of the joke played on him, but shook his fist at Claude in such a way that the little man was well aware that he had been detected.

"Major Bracebridge is just a real—oh! he's a true blue not to give me away," thought Claude; "I guess he was a boy himself once, sure."

He who "was a boy himself once" had his quiet fun with Claude for the rest of the fishing excursion. Every now and then he made signs—and he was good at making them—intimating that he was about to inform Hunter of the little man's pranks, signaling to Claude in a most comical way, which showed how young the Major's heart yet was—that when Hunter came to know how Claude had been fooling him, the

said Claude's arm would certainly be remarkably sore from the pounding and pummeling it would be sure to receive.

At noon all landed and took lunch under a large-spreading beech tree whose shade was doubly grateful after the glare on the water. Jokes, songs, and laughter were the accompaniment of this rural feast, at which several of the fish which had been caught were cooked and eaten. The day passed all too quickly. All days do that are replete with pleasure. The dinner that evening was a repetition of the previous one, with the balance in favor of a little more pleasure than at the previous meal.

At length came the time for the return journey to the college. A double span of horses, tandem, were to take them home. With laughter and handshaking and farewells often repeated, the dozen happy boys piled into the family brake.

As the coachman mounted his box Major Bracebridge placed a package at his feet. "One mile," said the Major; the coachman touched his hat. Amid the leavetaking and cheers by the boys, and the waving of handkerchiefs from the steps of Rosecroft Manor, no one paid much attention to this incident.

With a promise on the part of Ambrose to renew acquaintances the following September, at the new term of college, and with hearty cheers from twelve pairs of strong lungs, the happy party commenced their homeward journey.

The host of Rosecroft Manor stood on the steps of his ancestral home with his wife and daughter and Ambrose.

"What do you think of St. Cuthbert's boys, Am-

brose?" he asked. "I hear they threw you into the lake last night."

"Yes, they turned the tables on me. What do I think? I think those boys fear nothing in the wide world except to do wrong."

"Yes, there's something about those lads that I have never found in other boys I have ever known. I wonder what it is?"

"I'm going to try to find out next September."

"I wish you would. I am sure it is worth knowing."

The merry party had not gone more than a mile when the driver stopped his horses for a moment and handed the package over the seat to the boys.

"Master's orders, gentlemen."

Cutting the strings, they found to their great delight, that each had been presented with a pound box of fine candied fruits; on each box a name was pinned, and on a large card was written "To the St. Cuthbert's guests of Rosecroft Manor."

Was there ever such a host, thought the boys. Were there ever such happy boys?

Their cup of happiness seemed full when, on their arrival at the college, Mr. Hillson sent them all to the infirmary building, where some aromatic hot coffee was awaiting them, and told them to take a long sleep in the morning and rise in time for a seven o'clock Mass, which one of the Fathers had promised to say for them.

CHAPTER XXXV.

AN EXPERIMENT.

WHEN Buckley ran away on the night of Rob Jones' accident there commenced a change for the better in the tone of the boys of the large yard. Gideon Deming's public expulsion had helped greatly. He was perhaps the most undesirable boy that had ever been at St. Cuthbert's. It may be remembered how on that occasion the President had remained inexorable to the pleadings of the prefect that there should be something less severe than the public expulsion of Deming. The greater experience of the priest had seen the necessity of the course, and although it had been most distasteful to him, he had not flinched from performing a most unpleasant duty. The wisdom of his course was shown by the good effects that had at once followed.

Those who understand college life are well acquainted with the facts that there are always two opposing elements at work. The one has an upward, elevating tendency; the other a downward one. The element that works for good is found among the sodalities, among the manly, open characters, and among those who are enthusiasts in all the athletic and open air sports. The two latter qualities are nearly always found in combination, and not unfrequently the three characteristics are found in one person. The "downward" element in a college can too easily be found among the corner loungers and trouble-makers both in the yard and in the class room.

From either category I exclude the grumbler. This

species is found in both camps. Grumbling and real goodness do not seem to be absolutely incompatible. It must be remarked, however, that this habit is rarely found among those who, at home, have all they could wish for. On the contrary, those who are frequently pinched at home, and whose parents are often making grave sacrifices to give an education to their boys, these, as educators will tell you, are the ones who assume the right of sitting in judgment on everything; for whom nothing is good enough except the water and salt. Every one of common sense must know that school fare can not, by the very nature of the case, be as good or as tasty as one gets in a small family circle.

As before remarked, the expulsion of Deming was a benefit. The absence of Buckley was also not without its advantages. Through the Hunter-Stapleton-Selby influence Rob Jones was a changed boy, and could now be justly reckoned among the leaders in all things pertaining to the upward tendency. Finch, too, under the same influences, had ceased to be a source of anxiety to the authorities.

Mr. Hillson, the prefect, was not, however, free from anxieties. There was still far too large a membership of the "delectable gang." Occasionally it may happen in a well conducted college, where the machinery, spiritual and educational—if such an expression be allowed—appears to be in the smoothest running order, where zeal and experience and a vast knowledge are not wanting; it may happen in spite of all these things, in spite of all the care and watchfulness and experienced forethought of devoted men, that sometimes matters go woefully wrong. A blight appears to settle on many. Heartsore and weary, pro-

fessors and prefects work on as against some impalpable yet present evil. On such occasions the college spirit degenerates. Classwork deteriorates. A cankerworm is eating out the vitality of those who come under its influence.

It must not be supposed that such a spirit was universal or even at all general at St. Cuthbert's. Were it so such boys as Hunter and Selby and Stapleton and Falvey, and all the friends whose careers we have been following in these chapters could not have existed. The number at St. Cuthbert's to whom the above remarks apply did not count more than a dozen—twenty at the most. But a dozen bad boys have an alarming power for evil. These boys were the undesirable section of the college. With them, piety, the ornament of a student's life, was at a discount. None of them wished to be thought good, while several of them boasted of a hard, unboyish "toughness," which the poor fellows imagined to be manly, or man-like, and quite the thing.

Many anxious hours Mr. Hillson spent in trying to think out some remedy for this evil. He saw the harm that could be done by a few black sheep in his chosen flock. As one rotten apple will, in a very short time, contaminate and destroy a whole barrellful, so the influence of one or two thoroughly bad boys will work an evil which sometimes takes a lifetime to eradicate.

There was, notwithstanding, a very broad streak of silver lining of hope to Mr. Hillson's cloud of anxiety. The large majority of boys in the yard were uncontaminated by this spirit. Bright, open, candid boys held aloof from those few because they did not like

the general tone of their conversation. After much thought Mr. Hillson decided to make an experiment. He determined to utilize some of the middle-sized boys in whom he could place implicit confidence, and with these try to leaven the whole mass of those whose tendency was downward.

"Winters, come to my room when the bell rings for study," he said to our friend, a day or two after the visit to Rosecroft.

The boy's bright eyes opened wider than usual. He was surprised. Claude's sturdy legs stood still long enough for him to touch his hat and say:

"Shall I come now, sir?"

"No, Claude. Finish your game first. I will not keep you long when you do come."

"All right, sir," and Sunbeam touched his hat again, and went on with his game.

When the bell rang for studies Mr. Hillson waited for Claude in his room. In a few minutes he heard a shout, the banging of a door, a scramble of running feet coming up the stairs and scarcely less noise as the feet advanced rapidly along the corridor. A hasty knock at the door and Claude Winters stood before Mr. Hillson, out of breath, and with eyes still sparkling with the excitement of the game he had just left.

"I'm here, Mr. Hillson, sir!"

"Yes, I see. What a hurricane you are, Claude!"

"Guess I'm made that way, sir. Mother calls me a hurricane at home, too, sir."

"I should not wonder, Claude. Sit down and get your breath."

Claude sat down. His face was rosy from his recent

game. As Mr. Hillson watched him pulling his cap out of all shape, he thought him a handsome boy. And he was handsome. He was small, yet stoutly built, with good thick arms and legs which promised well for future health and strength. He did not look a heavy boy. He was strong and sturdy. Young as he was he had already one crooked, or "baseball" finger. But what boy, if he has gone as far as rhetoric in college, has not? Claude's eyes were his most remarkable feature. They were large and of steel gray, shaded by thick eyebrows which met between the eyes, giving an observer the idea that their owner possessed unwonted strength of character and firmness of purpose. These and a firm mouth told one that if Claude Winters promised you, he would keep his word; that if he set about accomplishing anything he would spare no pains to bring the matter in hand to a successful issue. There was that also in his face which indicated danger for its possessor, for a judge of character, such as the one now watching him, would know that if the boy went wrong he would not stop at half measures, but go very far wrong indeed.

"Sufficient breath now to answer a few questions, Claude?"

"Guess so, Mr. Hillson. Try me."

There was a respectful familiarity on Claude's part toward his prefect. Somehow Claude could never get over the notion of regarding him as his big brother.

"I see you don't play much baseball in the yard this summer?"

"No, sir; those fellows who play in the yard play there 'cause they ain't generally let go to the ball-field—"

"I know that, Claude," replied Mr. Hillson, smiling at the young rhetorician's English.

"—And those fellows are no good, and then—" But Claude stopped short.

"Then what?"

"Oh, nothing, sir. I am no tell-tale."

"That's right, my boy. I despise tale-bearers. But you can speak in a general way. Besides, I think I know as much as you can tell me."

Claude Winters, however, remained silent.

"Go on, Claude. Say what you were going to tell me. Perhaps it's your duty to do so. I will tell you what I have to say afterward."

"Well, sir, many of those boys are not like they were when I first came to college."

"No?"

"No, sir. The truth is the 'yard crowd,' as we call them, are not good boys—not a bit like they used to be. (There was not much change in the boys, but Claude was seeing more as he grew older.) Many of that crowd swear now and tell bad stories. I don't know what's come over those fellows."

"Not all of them?"

"Many of them, sir; and it's a shame, too. Some of 'em get away down in the corner of the yard and just talk and talk, and I know it isn't good either, for one day I was on the other side of the fence hunting for a lost ball, and they didn't know I was there and they talked, oh!—just awful, and some of them were big boys, too—" and the righteous indignation that big boys should be bad boys, shone in his eyes.

"Yes, Claude, I know a good deal of that kind of thing is most likely going on with some few boys, but

it is a very difficult thing to pick out the real leaders, so as not to punish the victims. Now I want you to help me."

"Me! but I—I—I can't, sir—"

"Don't be alarmed, my boy. I want your help in a far different way from what you imagine. I can do all the prefecting myself. Your help will be very different from that. Now, I am going to form a secret society of some boys whom I can trust. The strangest part of this society will be that no member will know another. He will know nobody in it except himself and myself. There will be no organization, no meetings, no regulations."

Claude began to open his eyes in wonder.

"What's it all for, Mr. Hillson?" he asked.

"Wait until I tell you the name of the society. It is to be called the Secret Society of the Perpetual Lily. Does the name suggest anything to you?"

"Lots," replied the boy, sententiously.

"Good; now let me tell you what the society will exist for. It is to prevent bad talk as far as possible, but not by open remonstrance, but by general conduct which shall be opposed to it. When members hear it and can not prevent it, they are to make an act of reparation. Every member will be required to make a promise to me that he will never tell anybody else that he is a member excepting his mother and his confessor. I have a box of peculiar five cornered medals, such as could never be purchased in this country. They were sent to me from Rome. Each member will have one of these, which he is not to wear openly, but he is to pin it on the inside of his vest pocket."

"But I don't like bringing stories," objected Claude.

"Nothing bad is ever to be reported to me, except in extreme cases where a member knows and is sure that some great harm is being done to the good name of the college, or when he is perfectly certain that a good boy is being led into temptation, and is in danger of becoming a bad one. All the members—whom I shall select myself—shall report to me once a month, but only the good things he has done. Every boy shall, in a quiet and prudent way, try to prevent bad talking and swearing, by making a manly stand against these things. There are no prayers to be said, not even a communion to be made unless by each one's private devotion. Boys who are members of the Perpetual Lily, by their own honest, manly conduct, shall set a good example, prudently encouraging those who desire to do right, giving especial attention to those who show any desire to leave undesirable acquaintances. Last of all, I shall never, under any consideration, recognize any of the members, either in the class room or in the yard. What do you think of my plan, Winters?"

During the recital the plan had caught Claude's fancy. He became all animation at once.

"Why, it's just bully!"

"It's just what?" said Mr. Hillson, in feigned surprise.

"It's just splendid, sir. I think we can do lots of good. Let me see. Quite a number of fellows would join that. Why, there's—"

"Hold on there. You are going against the constitution the very first thing. You are robbing me of my prerogatives. Didn't I say no one was to know of any one else?"

"Oh! I forgot."

"Would you like to be a member?"

"Sure, sir."

"Well, then, I make you one now if you will keep the secret. I do not even tell you whether you are the first member or the tenth."

Mr. Hillson then gave Claude his medal. The lad was delighted with the task entrusted to him, experiencing a youthful sense of great importance. About a dozen of the best boys were initiated in the same way soon after this interview. The prefect watched those whom he had chosen very closely. Soon there were some decidedly good results. How did Claude Winters conduct himself?

One day about two weeks after the formation of the society the prefect was, as usual, walking up and down the yard. Nearly all those who enjoyed the privilege, were out for a walk beyond the college bounds. The usual number of about a dozen, who for lack of a good conduct card were not allowed to go out of bounds, and a few who stayed at home from choice, were engaged in a game of baseball. Mr. Hillson looked up suddenly and saw several boys clustered around the home-plate. He did not pay much attention to this, thinking it was an ordinary squabble of which baseball, when earnestly played, is so prolific. A minute or two later he looked across the yard again. This time he saw that a number of boys were trying to hide from him two boys who were actually engaged in an earnest fight. Two boys were bleeding at the nose. Claude Winters was one of the combatants. One eye was blackened, and his upper lip was badly cut. The other boy had been severely punished.

"What! fighting, Winters? I'm surprised at you!"

"I punched him in the nose, and I'm glad I did it," said Claude, more or less defiantly. It was the first time Winters had been known to fight.

"Every boy go to the study-hall."

This meant some extra tasks for all those not on the good conduct list for the month.

"Winters, go to my room and wait there till I come."

It was several minutes before Mr. Hillson came up to his room. In the meantime Claude's nose had stopped bleeding, but one eye was much swollen and was becoming black. The prefect made the boy take a wash.

"That face of yours, Claude, doesn't look particularly creditable to the Society of the Perpetual Lily. But tell me all about it."

"I'll tell you how it happened, sir. Gregson was pitching and when something didn't go as he wanted it, he used the holy name. I told him if he said that again I'd punch him in the nose. He did use it again. We fought, and I would fight again."

Mr. Hillson was not a demonstrative man. He had seen far too many years of training and self-repression to give way to his feelings, but he felt just at that moment as probably nine out of every ten who read these lines would have felt. He had a strong inclination to take the boy—the hero—up in his arms and press him to his heart. He did not do so, but said, instead, to the young champion:

"Now, Claude, comes the hardest part of the membership of the Secret Society of the Perpetual Lily. I'm going to give you a penance of some lines to learn for fighting."

"Oh, I don't mind that, sir!"

For a couple of days during play-time Claude was engaged in learning lines. When they were all repeated, he remarked to Mr. Hillson:

"I guess I shall soon have more to learn, sir, for now I've begun I am going to make that Gregson stop using bad language."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WALK AND WHAT CAME OF IT.

At length the end of the school year came. The small boys of St. Cuthbert's—and many a large boy, too, if the truth were known—had counted the days. A month before the end some of the more ardent had numbered the hours yet to be spent at school before the vacation time came. One or two enthusiasts had even taken the trouble to calculate the number of minutes. Of course all this was more or less foolish. It had the effect of making the time appear to pass more slowly. But youngsters longing for home, and mother's fond embrace, and for the joys of vacation time did not think so. In fact, I believe boys in such circumstances have never thought so. Our boys took their pleasures of anticipation in a fashion long drawn out. At all events this calculating process is one of those cases in which a schoolboy thinks he knows better what is good for him than any one else can possibly tell him.

Our friends, whose various doings have been recorded in these pages, and in whom we are fain to believe our readers have been interested, did not find the time go slowly. They played heartily when they played, and worked with equal vigor when they were at their books.

Their recent visit to Rosecroft Manor had made somewhat of an interruption in their preparations for the final examinations. All were now, therefore, doubly anxious to make up for any lost time. Principle, ambition, and gratitude were the impelling motives now, for hard study during the repetitions. Perhaps the last mentioned was the strongest of the three. All were honorably anxious that the Reverend President's indulgence in granting them that unusual outing should not be repaid by lowering of the record of their notes.

Stapleton, Selby, and Hunter each aimed at leading their class. They were about equally matched, too. Even the professors of the class were unable to guess which of the three would be the honor man of the class.

Jones also, although he was two classes lower than his newly found friends, under their influence and companionship, had caught more or less of their spirit of hard study. Since his return to school after his recovery, he had gained the entire good will of his teachers. That night spent in the ravine had been the turning-point in his life. Hunter's influence over him had been for good, and now he felt stirring within him noble thoughts and nobler ambitions for a useful life. Although realizing that for him, this year, it would be out of the question to expect to stand in the final ex-

aminations anywhere near the top of the list, yet his professors saw with pleasure that he was making an earnest effort to attain at least a good position in the class.

The examinations were to begin on the second Monday in June. They would last two weeks. For each day one subject was assigned in which all the classes were obliged to undergo a written examination simultaneously. The afternoon and evening of each day was given to free study, the matter of which each boy selected for himself, thus giving the students an opportunity for a final repetition in any branch in which they recognized themselves deficient.

One more event was destined to break the routine of the examination time for our friends, and it happened in this wise:

Hunter, Winters, Stapleton, and Selby were lying under the shade of some large elm trees which skirted the ball-field, on the second Tuesday of the examination weeks. Each had a book and all were silently conning the matter of the following day's examination. Unconsciously they had assumed graceful poses.

There had been perfect silence for a long time. Nothing was heard save the hum of the myriad of summer insects or the shrill chirp of the field cricket. Stapleton's Greek book dropped on his chest, and he sighed.

"I don't know what's the matter," he said; "I have been pounding here for an hour and can not remember anything I read."

"That's just my case," remarked Selby; "my head aches and I am really unable to do any preparation for the Greek paper to-morrow."

"I wish I were as well prepared as you fellows are," said Claude Winters. "I would throw the text-book away for the afternoon and take a good, long, tiring walk. I'm as dull and as stupid as—as Stapleton."

"Extremely obliged," said the worthy referred to, "but my! I must be awfully bad! I declare my muscles are getting quite flabby with all this studying and no exercise," and the young athlete pulled his soft summer shirt tightly over his arm muscles, which he began to flick.

"I think Winters' suggestion a good one," said Howard Hunter. "We have dropped all exercise too suddenly. We all want a good long walk. Let us go and ask permission from the prefect to be out till six o'clock. It's two now. A four hours' tramp will be fine, and we shall be able to do better work to-night and to-morrow. I want to get the cobwebs out of my brain, too."

In a moment the studious group was all animation. Mr. Hillson, the prefect, readily granted the required permission when he learned the names of the proposed pedestrians.

"I think the tramp will do all four of you good," he said. "I recommend you to take the hill road. Come back thoroughly tired. You may stay out till seven if you wish. If you are not back for supper, I will, this once, have some prepared for you in the infirmary."

The boys were delighted with the privilege granted, but more so that Mr. Hillson should consider them worthy of it. They started out in high glee. All head weariness seemed to vanish instantly. For over two miles they passed through beautiful farm lands,

walked through meadows rich with hay and fields of growing grain which promised a later, golden harvest. It did not take them long to reach the edge of the forest which clothed the sides of a short but rather steep range of hills. They left the road which ran along the base of the hills and plunged into the forest, intending to reach the summit by means of a bridle-path and a blazed road.

The boys found the mountain climb much more laborious than they had anticipated. Their desire of getting thoroughly tired would apparently be amply realized.

After resting once on a fallen tree about half way up, the walkers started once more, determined to reach the top of the hill, from whence an extensive view of a beautiful country could be had. When they had rested there for an hour they would commence the return journey. At the summit of the elevation there was known to be a spring of coolest water, which the heat of the June sun, and the thirst occasioned by the exertion of walking, made the excursionists most anxious to test.

"Played out, Claude?" asked big Stapleton of Winters, when but two-thirds of the mountain climb was finished.

"No, Frank, but my legs are tired, sure. Let us rest a little on this level spot."

All agreed, of course only for Claude's sake, and they bantered and teased him most unmercifully. The original formation of the mountain range had left a level space of about two acres, high up on the hill-side. This species of shelf was kept moist by a spring, and was consequently covered with rich and beauti-

fully green grass. Beech and birch, cottonwood and shady lindens were plentiful.

"Look, Howard," said Winters, "those tall, straight tulip trees resemble the columns of a cathedral, don't they?"

"Yes, Claude, it requires but slight imagination to see in them the pillars of a large church. It is said that from them the ancient Greeks first got the notion of the beautiful fluted Corinthian column."

"And in the wind the trees sound like the music of a grand organ!" continued the poetic Claude.

"'Tis a fine place for the performance of a Greek tragedy," remarked Howard.

Claude looked around. "Yes," he said, "that high land against the side of the hill would answer for a stage, and this slight dip in front of us would do for the hiding of the chorus, and they could bob up from their hiding-place just when they were wanted."

"You irreverent youngster," exclaimed Stapleton, "to talk of the venerable Greek chorus in that way."

Just at that moment the breeze freshened and played among the trees. It was nature's choral symphony. Indeed it sounded remarkably like the deep diapason of some grand old cathedral organ. All listened intently.

"Isn't it grand!" exclaimed Hunter.

"Hush! what's that?" asked Stapleton.

"I heard nothing, except the wind," said both Selby and Winters.

"Perhaps you heard a wild-cat," remarked the latter.

"Hush, Claude," said Frank, again listening intently.

But Claude's spirit of mischief was again in the ascendant.

"Do hush, Claude."

"O, what you hear, if you hear anything, is only the cracked voices of the old Greek chorus!" said the irreverent youngster.

"Do be quiet a minute."

"Can't do it, you know. I'm only an irreverent youngster, you know," continued Claude.

By this time Howard Hunter's attention was also attracted by some sound which differed from the whispering of the wind-kissed leaves. But Claude went on chattering and teasing Frank. At last Stapleton turned to Winters and said:

"Winters—stop!" Claude then saw that his friend was in earnest about something.

"Why, what's up, Frank? What makes you talk in that strange way?"

"Hist! It seems to me I hear a moan."

All rose to their feet in excitement.

"That's the moaning of the wind in the trees—" began Claude, but Stapleton's hand was laid on Winters' shoulder, either by excitement or of intent, in such a manner that Claude realized that it might be a serious matter for him if he continued to babble on.

"Hist!"

All four stood listening intently. Then they heard a sound, faintly, but distinctly.

"That's human," said Hunter, with a white face.

"Better be careful. It may be only a wild-cat or a mountain lion," said Selby.

"No. I'm sure that's a human voice of one in pain," said Howard.

They all began to search cautiously among the undergrowth of the forest-clad hillside. Presently there came a shout from Hunter.

"Ho! hello! Frank! Harry! Claude! Come here. Quick! quick!"

All rushed to where Hunter's voice had sounded.

"What is it, Howard? What have you found?"

"Look."

What did the boys see? The awestruck group looked upon a rough looking man lying with his blood-stained face turned toward the sky. Blood was on his coarse, blue shirt. It had flowed from his chest. With his hand he had attempted to staunch the flow; afterward the hand had evidently stroked the brow, leaving the face besmeared with blood and giving it a ghastly look. It was this man's moans which Stapleton's sharp ears had first detected amid the rustling of the leaves. When discovered the man had apparently just fainted again.

"Is he dead?" whispered the frightened Claude.

"No, I think not, Claude," said Hunter; "he has fainted from suffering and exhaustion."

"Do you think he has been murdered?" timidly asked the small boy again.

"No, but look at that gun there. That explains all. Evidently it was accidentally discharged into the poor fellow's lungs. See, the lock of the gun is still caught by that bramble."

The boys looked and saw that a large brier-shoot was still entangled in the trigger of the gun. The hunter had probably been carrying his gun rather carelessly, perhaps by the barrel—for hunters grow careless at times—and an unobserved bramble-shoot had

caught the trigger. The man, turning the same moment, had evidently received the greater part of the charge in the breast. The unfortunate fellow's shaggy, unkempt hair, and the gray stubble of a beard of a week's growth on his drink-marked face gave him an uncanny, disgusting appearance.

"What's to be done?" asked Selby; "Does any one know him?"

None had recognized the man. Just then Stapleton took a more searching glance at the features. He was shocked. He had seen that face before. But where? Where had he seen that coarse, almost brutal face? Ah! it was poor Deming's tempter in evil ways—the man who had led the weak boy astray, pandered to his inclination for strong drink, and had led him into the devious ways of dishonesty which had ended in his downfall and disgraceful exposure and expulsion from St. Cuthbert's. Frank experienced utter disgust at the sight of the man, even wounded as he was. His first momentary impulse was to declare who he was and advise the rest of the party to leave him to his fate. Of course, this feeling was only momentary. The remembrance of his duty as a Christian and his common sense immediately reasserted themselves.

"Do you know him, Howard?" asked Frank in a significant tone. Howard did not answer, but looked long into the unconscious man's face. Then by a telegraphic communication of the eyes he intimated to Frank that at last he had recognized the victim of the accident. Frank hurriedly put his finger to his lips as a signal to Howard not to divulge the man's identity to the other two boys. Thus charity is ingenious.

"Frank, you and Selby had better go at once for

assistance. Make all speed you can to the college and tell Father Lovelace that a man is dying up here on the mountain. It's five miles to home, and he may be dead in a very short time."

"All right. I'll get a horse from the first farm house I come to."

"Do; and, Harry, you had better ask some one from the farm house to come up and help us."

Both boys started down the hill at a rapid run.

"You are not afraid to stay with a dying man, Claude?"

"Not with you, Howard," was the reply.

The two boys collected some limbs and long grass and made a couch for the wounded man. Gently and tenderly they placed him on it, raising his head and chest. Howard felt something hard in the man's coat pocket. It proved to be a hunter's flask. It contained perhaps half a wine glass of ill-smelling whisky. The moving of the wounded man started again the flow of blood from his lungs which the frightened boys tried to staunch as best they could. Howard moistened the man's lips with the liquor. These operations had the effect of restoring the sufferer to consciousness. With a groan he opened his eyes.

"Where am I? Oh! I remember. The gun went off. I—am—dying."

Claude ran to the trickling stream hard by and soaked his handkerchief, with which he cooled the poor fellow's brow and lips.

"That's good! But who are you boys? You are college boys, ain't you?"

Howard made him swallow the remainder of the whisky. "Never mind who we are, my friend. Be-

lieve me, you have only a few minutes to live. We have sent for help. Won't you turn your thoughts to God and eternity now?"

The man, to whom full consciousness had been restored, appeared startled at these earnest words. He made an effort to speak.

"You're from the college! Boy, do you know who I am?"

"Yes, yes," said Hunter; "I know you very well."

"And you are willing to help me when you know all I've done to hurt some of you fellows?"

"Of course I am. Don't talk about that now. Your time, I assure you, is very short. Won't you think about your soul. Are you not sorry for all your sins?"

"Sorry, boy? I should say I am! I've been here since early morning—fainted five times—and had time to think, too. Thought I should die here like a dog alone. Sorry! you can't guess how bad I feel now. Things look sort of different when one faces death, don't they?"

"Yes. Do you believe in Jesus Christ as God?" asked Hunter anxiously.

"Yes, but religion ain't bothered me much, I tell you. I'm going an' I'll have to take my chances."

"No, no, no," said Howard so earnestly that the man was startled. "Take no chance. The risk, my friend, is far too great. Won't you make an act of contrition? That will save you."

"You seem to take a good deal of interest in me, young fellow. Act of contrition! What's that? Guess I ain't up to your talk. Never heard of it."

"I mean this. Will you not say to God from your heart that you are sorry for all the sins of your life,

and that if granted longer life you would be a different man?"

"Guess I would, an' I'd do that act you speak of if I knew how, too. Give me some more o' that whisky."

"It's all gone," said Howard.

"Gone, is it! Well, I s'pose I sha'n't want whisky much longer, anyway. Say, young fellow, seems to me you're pretty good to an old rowdy like me what's done some of your chums some pretty rough turns—rough I tell you! Now, boy, for the prayin', 'cause I feel I sha'n't be able soon to speak any."

Notwithstanding the uncouth speech Howard saw behind all what he believed to be a sore and contrite heart. With gentle care and distinctness he repeated an act of contrition and made the sufferer repeat it slowly word for word after him. In the same manner he said the Our Father and the Hail Mary. Of the latter prayer the dying man comprehended but little.

"Oh! if I had the power, or if a priest would but come!" thought Howard in his anxiety. But he knew his wish could not be accomplished for some time. They were at least five miles from the college, and Stapleton had been gone less than half an hour. The wounded man was sinking fast. His voice was failing and had now become little more than a whisper. A fit of coughing might fill the lungs with blood, and then the end would come speedily.

Again and again did the boy repeat the words of the act of contrition. Although the wounded man did not repeat them again Howard and Claude saw by the faint tightening of his fingers or by a movement of his eyes that the man knew and accepted everything that was said.

Both boys were praying earnestly for the sufferer. They realized the awful responsibility of assisting one in his last moments. Suddenly a thought came to Hunter.

"Smith, were you ever baptized?"

"No," came the faint answer; "I ain't had no religion to speak on all my life. My folks they was Unitarians and I knowed they never gave me no christenin'. Never did have no religion, an' I guess I'd ha' been no credit to it if I ha' had it."

"Take this flask, Claude; quick!" said Hunter; "wash it and fill it with water. Be quick!"

"Now," said Hunter as Winters returned, "I am going to baptize you. You believe in Jesus Christ? You are sorry for your past life? Were you to live you would live a better life, wouldn't you, and do as well as you could what Christ wishes you to do?"

"Sure I would," was the answer, and Howard was convinced that the man meant what he said.

"Well, then, say to God how sorry you are for all your sins, and I will baptize you, and I promise you that by the grace of this sacrament you will go to heaven."

The poor man was much impressed by Howard's words and assuring tones. He closed his fingers tighter, and the boys saw his lips moving, although they could catch no sound. Then making an intention of doing what the Church does, Hunter poured the water on the dying man's brow, at the same time saying: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Scarcely had Howard finished the sacred rite which the Church gives everybody the power to administer in

cases of necessity, when a change came over the man. His face became paler, his breathing more labored. The end was fast approaching.

Whispering words of hope and contrition into the wounded man's ear, Howard saw a solitary tear glisten under his eyelid.

"Kiss me, boy."

The demand was startling, the object repulsive. But Howard, not to refuse a dying request, bent over and kissed his lips. Old habits return at the hour of death. At the last moments of his life, perhaps, visions of innocent childhood all came back, and all the better, natural affections were once more aroused in his breast. Who can tell? It was the last office Howard performed, for a minute later the final breath was drawn; the body of Smith lay back lifeless. His soul so freshly bedewed with the baptismal waters had flown to meet its God.

Thus the walk taken to drive out the cobwebs from the brain had proved a much greater distraction than any of the four had anticipated. The truth must be told that the remaining examination papers were not so well done by our four friends as their professors and Mr. Hillson had expected. But under the circumstances the faculty made allowances, and so did their parents, seeing that their records were good throughout the year.

At length the counted minutes had all been exhausted. The great day of the home-going had arrived. All the students going east and west and north are clustered on the depot platform. In a few hours more every one will be at home and in the arms of—mother, that perennial attraction of all home-goers

however far we roam from the parental roof-tree. Such good-byes! Such farewells! Such handshakings! Even the worst boys show at their best at such times. And our hero and his friends? A dozen times they had shaken hands all around. A dozen times had each promised all the others to write to them every week during the holidays. Many other such rash promises were being made when the whistle of the incoming train put everybody once more in motion. They were as happy and as busy as a group of swarming bees. As they steam out amid the cheers and waving of caps and handkerchiefs, we leave our young friends, bidding them a safe journey home and a pleasant vacation.

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